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of the Soviet Union

The Bolshevik Party and the Democratic Revolution in Russia

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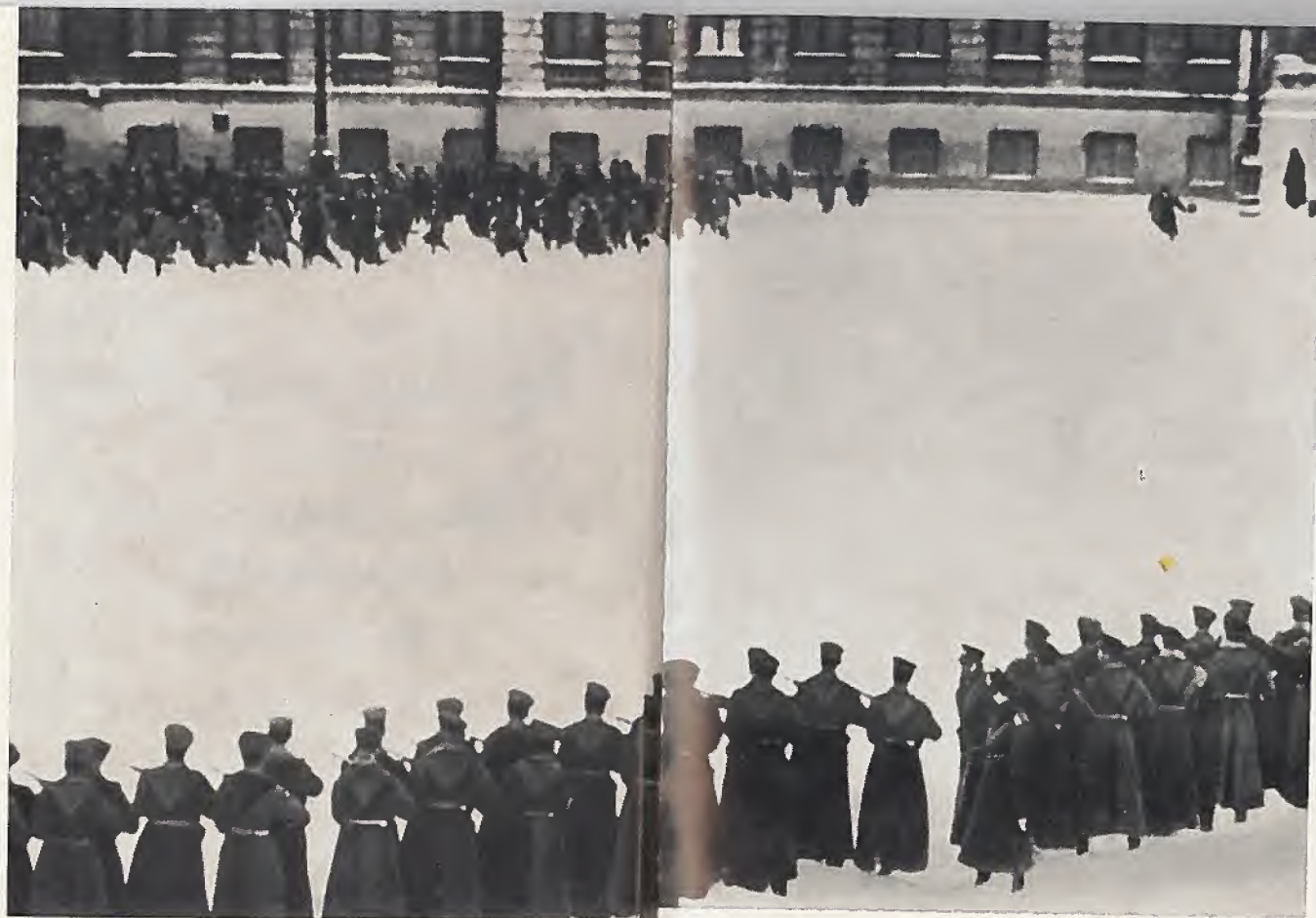
Yuri KLIMOV

**The Bolshevik Party
and
the Democratic
Revolution
in Russia**

**THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE PERIOD
OF REACTION (1905-1910)**



**Novosti Press Agency Publishing House
Moscow, 1975**



*The shooting of
workers near the
Winter Palace on
January 9, 1905*



Workers on strike



Lenin in 1910



*At the Third
Congress of the
Russian Social
Democratic
Labour Party*



*The cover of
Lenin's pamphlet
"Two Tactics of
Social-Democracy
in the Democratic
Revolution"*



*The battleship
"Potemkin"*

*Rebel sailors on
board the
battleship, June
1905*



"The all-Russia political strike has this time involved the whole country, uniting all the peoples of the accursed Russian 'Empire' in the heroic rising of a class that is the most oppressed and the most advanced". (Lenin, Coll. Works, Vol. 9, p. 393)

Kharkov

Kolomna

Moscow



Krasnoyarsk



Verkhne-Isetsk (the Urals)



*Fighting at the
barricades in a
Moscow street,
December 1905*



*The building in
London where the
Fifth Congress of
the Russian Social
Democratic Labour
Party took place*



*Felix Dzerzhinsky
Yakov Sverdlov
Sergo
Ordzhonikidze*

The quest for a valid, truly scientific revolutionary doctrine, pursued by the Russian revolutionaries for over half a century bore fruit in the mid-1890's. At the cost of many setbacks and after trying out in practice and critically examining the relative worth of different doctrines, Russian revolutionary thought and the working-class movement finally arrived at Marxism. A mass working-class movement emerged linked with Social Democracy. Within Social Democracy there sprang up two currents—revolutionary Marxism and opportunism. Lenin waged a determined struggle for Marxism. He set up in St. Petersburg the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class which formed the base of a Marxist party in Russia. There began a new, Leninist, era in the development of Marxism.

Early in the 20th century a revolution was coming to a head in Russia; the working class had forged its ideological and political weapon to be used in the battles ahead. The newspaper *Iskra* (the Spark), which was produced under Lenin's supervision, prepared the way for the emergence of a Marxist party in Russia. The Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party¹ marked

¹ Already at its Second Congress in 1903, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (founded in 1898 from diverse Marxist circles and groups) split into Bolsheviks (consistent revolutionaries) and Mensheviks (reformists), who later, formed independent parties. Lenin headed the Bolshevik party from its foundation until his death in 1924.

the beginning of the Bolshevik party, a party of socialist revolution and proletarian dictatorship. The Bolsheviks fought relentlessly against the Mensheviks to build the party of a new type and for the leading role of the working class in the revolution. The struggle of the Bolsheviks was spearheaded against opportunism in the international working-class movement.

In the course of this struggle Lenin evolved his doctrine making the party the chief weapon of the working class in the fight to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat through a victorious socialist revolution. Lenin emerged as the great leader of the proletariat. He succeeded Marx and Engels and further developed their theories. Lenin's works constitute the ideological heritage and firm theoretical foundation of the party.

The emergence of a workers' revolutionary Marxist party in Russia was of paramount significance to the future of Russia and the international working-class movement as a whole. For the first time in history, the worst oppressed and most revolutionary class, the proletariat, was entering upon a revolution led by an independent, Marxist, party of its own.

1. The 1905-07 Revolution in Russia—the First Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution in the Imperialist Era

HOW THE REVOLUTION BEGAN IN RUSSIA

Early in the morning of January 9, 1905, which was to go down in Russian history as "Bloody Sunday," workers of St. Petersburg began to gather at nine separate points in the capital. They wore their best clothes, and many had brought their wives and children with them. Arranged in columns and carrying national flags, icons and portraits of the tsar, they set out for the centre, where the tsar's palace stood. Here and there in the lines people sang "God Save the Tsar." Marching in front of the procession was Gapon, a priest. He was a secret agent of the police. At his suggestion a petition had been written the day before, asking the tsar to grant the people civil liberties and better conditions of life.

The Bolsheviks had pointed out the dangers inherent in Gapon's idea. A leaflet issued by the Petersburg Party Committee warned the people that

they could not expect to buy freedom so cheaply, that freedom had to be fought for, by armed struggle. No begging or pressing the tsar, no grovelling before this sworn enemy of the people would be any good, they were told. The one and only way to gain freedom was to topple him from his throne and sweep out the autocracy.

But the workers, made desperate by their terrible poverty and politically still naïve, were duped by Gapon's idea. They allowed themselves to be persuaded and put their signatures to the petition to the tsar.

In a last-minute attempt to prevent bloodshed, democratic intellectuals sent a delegation under the famous Russian author Maxim Gorki to see Vitte, the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers. Vitte, however, sent them to the Home Minister. The delegation was finally received by an assistant of the Minister, who merely suggested that they might themselves try to persuade the workers to give up their plan. By then, however, it was too late.¹

When the workers saw troops in the streets, many of them approved, saying, "They are here to ensure order." But they were wrong.

Bullets and mounted police met the procession. Many were killed, especially in Nevski Prospekt, the main street of the capital, and in the square in front of the tsar's palace. Even children, who had climbed up the trees in the Aleksandrovski Gardens round the palace to watch the procession, were fired upon.

The brutal massacre opened the people's eyes.

¹ Subsequently, nearly all members of the delegations were arrested. Maxim Gorki was put in prison and was released on bail only after vigorous public protest.

It destroyed their blind faith in the tsar. Even the most ignorant now saw that the tsarist autocracy was their sworn enemy. They no longer asked God to save the tsar. Bolsheviks told the workers there, in the streets running with blood, that they would have to fight for their freedom.

The Beginning of the Revolution in Russia was how Lenin entitled his article about those events. His answer to the tsarist officials who had boasted that they had taught the workers a lesson, was: "Yes, it was a great lesson, one which the Russian proletariat will not forget. The most uneducated, backward sections of the working class, who naïvely trusted the tsar and sincerely wished to put peacefully before 'the tsar himself' the petition of a tormented people, were all taught a lesson by the troops led by the tsar. . ."¹ Lenin pointed out the historic significance of the events of January 9, which had awakened the masses politically.

The massacre aroused a storm of indignation in Russia and among democratic opinion abroad. Strikes upholding economic and political demands and protest demonstrations were staged in all Russian towns and cities. Nearly half a million people took part in the workers' movement in January, following the fateful Sunday. This was more than the figure for the entire previous decade. In Odesa, Warsaw, Riga, Lodz and some other centres, strikes developed into armed actions.

The countryside followed suit. Peasant unrest was especially high in the Volga and Baltic areas, Transcaucasia and Poland. The peasants burned down landlords' estates, seizing and dividing the land among themselves. The more liberal-minded

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 8, p. 97.

of the landlords went so far as to advise the tsar to "cut some more land for the peasants before they cut our throats for us."

Revolutionary unrest extended to the Army and the Navy too, especially as they had been taking one crushing blow after another in the Russo-Japanese war then in progress.¹

The people were supported by the progressive intellectuals who considered it their duty to fight for democratic rights and political freedoms. Students took an active part in the revolutionary movement.

The flames of the revolution swept the whole of Russia, extending to all sections, classes and political parties. The revolution gave them their political baptism.

POLITICAL STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Social revolution is not a spontaneous process. It is a creative movement of the people in which constructive political efforts of classes and parties play a great role. Revolution requires every political party to define clearly where it stands, i.e., to spell out its strategy and tactics with reference to the revolution.²

Political strategy is a party's general line pursued throughout a historical period and aimed at accomplishing the principal tasks of that period.

¹ The 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war was an imperialist war between tsarist Russia and Japan.

² "By the party's tactics we mean the party's political conduct, or the character, direction, and methods of its political activity." (Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 22.) The reader must bear in mind that at that time the notion of tactics embraced strategy as well, the political conduct of a party being understood in broad terms.

It reflects the alignment of class forces both in the country and the world.

Tactics are an expression of a party's current policy, of the methods and forms of struggle employed in specific circumstances. They are worked out on the basis of the general line, for a term during which certain immediate tasks are to be accomplished, contributing to the achievement in the long term of the principal objectives of the historical period.

Political strategy and tactics are based on an objective study of the epoch and actual situations.

Political leadership is both a science and an art. A party has to work out a correct policy, and it has to translate it into practice. It takes time to learn how to organise the struggle and defeat the enemy, and how to win supporters and organise and lead them.

It is not before they have gained some political experience of their own that people will rally around a party, give it their confidence and support and fight for the victory of the revolution; "...millions of people will never listen to the advice of parties if that advice does not fall in with their own experience."¹

Therefore, in order to be able to enlist the support of the people, a party should employ such means and methods as take account of their experience and degree of political understanding and are clear to them. This does not imply that the party should accommodate itself to the lowest common denominator, however. It is the aim and duty of the party to be with the people—but to be in the vanguard, leading them.

The art of political leadership also consists in *mastering all forms of struggle and knowing how*

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 495.

to select and employ the most effective of them. It is necessary to be able to single out in due time and precisely the main task of the moment the solution of which decides the success of other tasks. Finding the "main link" is not a simple matter because of the conflicting and involved nature of political developments. Lenin observed that politics are "more like algebra than arithmetic, and still more like higher than elementary mathematics."¹

Its own experience and that of the fraternal parties and of the international revolutionary movement creatively applied by it help a party to exercise real political leadership. A truly revolutionary party does not learn merely from its achievements but from its errors and setbacks too, which it boldly uncovers and overcomes.

In mastering the art of political leadership much can be gained from an examination of the strategy and tactics of the Bolshevik party at the democratic and socialist stages of the revolution.

The Bolsheviks, who wanted to have a uniform Marxist tactical plan providing for united action by the masses in the revolution that had just started, called for the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party to convene its Third Congress without delay. All party organisations, Bolshevik and Menshevik, were invited to take part. The Mensheviks, however, refused to attend the congress and called a separate conference of their own in Geneva, "Two congresses—two parties," said Lenin of the situation existing in Russian Social Democracy.

The Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (April, 1905) worked out the strategy and tactics of the party in the bourgeois

democratic revolution, defined the aim of the revolution, assessed the alignment of class forces and determined the principal means and forms of the struggle for power of the proletariat and the peasantry.

The resolutions adopted by the Bolshevik congress and the Menshevik conference expressed two different political lines to be pursued in the course of the revolution. Moreover, they were expressive of two quite different approaches, one being revolutionary and the other reformist. The emergence of two contrary lines not only aggravated the split in the party but impaired the unity of action of the revolutionary forces in the revolution which had already begun.

In that situation unified party tactics could not be worked out by conciliating two opposed political lines or by finding a kind of "middle road." If the revolution were to succeed, it was essential that the work of Russian Social Democracy be based on the political resolutions adopted by the Bolsheviks at their congress.

Lenin's book *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905) was of great importance in this respect. In it Lenin substantiated the Bolsheviks' course for launching the revolution, exposed the Mensheviks' opportunist tactics, and enriched Marxism with his analysis of the character, distinctive features and driving force of the first Russian revolution.

THE CHARACTER AND DRIVING FORCE OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Revolution had been maturing in Russia for many years, until, at the turn of the century, conditions arose indicating that it was about to break forth. By that time capitalism in Russia, as else-

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 102.

where in the world, had entered its highest stage, imperialism, and was characterised by a sharpening of all the social and political contradictions of the capitalist system.

Imperialism in Russia had certain features not shared by other capitalist countries. In large-scale industry, capitalist monopolies developed at a rapid rate. Side by side with highly-developed capitalism were strong feudal survivals, economic and political. The latter were responsible for the most ruthless exploitation of the proletariat, extreme poverty of the peasants and brutal oppression of the non-Russian population.

The great concentration of the working class, its growing class-consciousness and organisation, the peasants' struggle for land, national unrest, and protests by progressive intellectuals, all served to put Russia into the foreground of the international revolutionary movement.

It brought the class struggle to a particularly sharp pitch in Russia, making the country the focal point of the contradictions in the whole capitalist network. Conditions were ripe for the social revolution, and it was knocking on the door.

What character would it assume?

The character of a revolution depends on what contradictions it has to resolve, on the production relations it sets out to destroy and those it sets out to establish.

The Bolsheviks saw the prospective revolution as a bourgeois revolution, that is, one aimed at smashing the survivals of serfdom and the monarchy. It was not its objective to create a society on socialist lines. It did not seek to abolish the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, it expressed the needs of development of capitalism in Russia and was due to the sharp conflict that had arisen be-

tween the development of the productive forces and the semi-feudal relations of production.

The social and economic changes the revolution was to bring about (the overthrow of tsarism, sweeping away of social barriers, abolition of large private landholdings and of onerous forms of exploitation in industry and farming, etc.) would do nothing at all to loosen the foundations of capitalism but, on the contrary, would promote its more rapid progress.

Who was to carry out the bourgeois revolution in Russia?

We know from history that on some occasions bourgeois revolutions were accomplished by the bourgeoisie, while the people took part in them without advancing any political demands of their own. But we also know that in some other instances the people emerged as active makers of the new way of life. The former are instances of revolutions carried out by the industrial and trading bourgeoisie, and the latter, of democratic revolutions in which the people take an active and independent part, putting forward political and economic demands of their own.¹

The Bolsheviks formulated the principal tasks to be achieved in the bourgeois democratic revolution in their Minimum Programme, adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1903. The programme was further elaborated and developed in the course of the revolution. It included the following aims, which would be clear to the people and have their support:

¹ The 1908 revolution in Turkey and the 1910 revolution in Portugal were instances of bourgeois (not popular) revolutions. The French revolution of 1789, on the other hand, was a typical bourgeois democratic revolution of the period of the collapse of feudalism.

an eight-hour workday to be promptly introduced and workers' other demands (state insurance, no deductions from pay, sanitary inspection, control of female and child labour, and so on) to be met;

revolutionary peasant committees to be set up to carry out democratic reforms in the countryside, including confiscation of land from the landlords;

mass political strikes to be staged, the workers to be armed, and a revolutionary army to be set up;

the tsarist autocracy to be overthrown and replaced by a democratic republic;

political rights and freedoms to be introduced (namely, universal, equal and direct suffrage, broad local self-government, freedom of conscience, and freedom of speech, of the press and assembly, the right to strike and form unions, the right to self-determination for all nationalities, election of judges, free compulsory general education and vocational training, and so on).

As we see, the gathering revolution was democratic in its tasks.

In assessing the first Russian revolution the Bolsheviks, however, did more than just recognise its bourgeois democratic character.

The Russian revolution, Lenin pointed out, was not an ordinary bourgeois democratic revolution of the "old type"¹ but was possessed of a character of its own. It was the first bourgeois democratic revolution in the period of imperialism to leave its stamp on this period and determine its particular features.

Early bourgeois democratic revolutions represent-

¹ Cf., Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11, p. 370.

ed separate links in the chain of struggle between capitalism and feudalism and were expressions of the general process of the rise of the bourgeoisie to power. The bourgeoisie was the leading force in those revolutions as it represented the relations of production which were the most advanced for that time and which determined the further progress of the productive forces.

The previous bourgeois democratic revolutions were popular as regards the forces that carried them through but they were not so judging by their results. They invariably ended up with one handful of exploiters replacing another in government and altering the country's institutions to suit their own interests. Although the proletariat and the peasantry took an active part in such revolutions, they helped the bourgeoisie—consciously or unwittingly—because capitalist contradictions were yet undeveloped. The bourgeoisie, for its part, aimed to suppress the revolutionary spirit of the people and make them accept "legal development," to be exploited "in peace." The early bourgeois democratic revolutions were but short-lived. Their character was not such as to rouse the mass of the people to anything like a sustained struggle.

The middle of the 19th century was a turning point in the history of Europe. The productive forces created under capitalism began to outgrow the capitalist relations of production. The advance of capitalist production brought the proletariat into the political arena. The bourgeoisie began to cast about amongst its own former opponents for support against the proletariat. The interests of the bourgeoisie became ever more closely identified with those of the upper classes. Many landlords began to traffic in financial operations or became factory owners, and many capitalists bought

land. The bourgeoisie would no longer support the peasants' struggle for land as this was now seen as an attack on one kind of property that could well lead to an attack on another kind.

As capitalism entered the stage of monopoly development, the imperialist bourgeoisie became ever more counter-revolutionary. The bourgeoisie, by dint of its class position, was interested in settling its differences with the old regime through reform, and certainly not through revolution. The bourgeoisie's leadership of a bourgeois revolution was sufficient to threaten the collapse of the revolution. The explanation of this paradox was that the productive forces had now outgrown the capitalist, as well as feudal, production relations, while the system of world imperialism as a whole had become ripe for a new social revolution. A bourgeois democratic revolution in the imperialist era was no longer able to bring the relations of production into correspondence with the character of the productive forces.

In the Russian revolution—the first bourgeois democratic revolution in the imperialist era—unlike the bourgeois revolutions of Western Europe of the period of rising capitalism, the bourgeoisie was no longer the principal driving force. There was a concurrence of economic and political interests of the Russian bourgeoisie and tsarism. The bourgeoisie was not interested in the overthrow of tsarism but merely sought certain bourgeois reforms to be carried out “from above” in line with its class interests. The bourgeoisie saw the preservation of the monarchy and surviving elements of feudalism as an advantage, for it could rely on them to support it against the proletariat, which was becoming a strong political force. As the revolution developed, the Russian bourgeoisie be-

came more and more counter-revolutionary until it finally sided with tsarism, joining the counter-revolutionary forces.

This was why it was necessary for the proletariat to head the bourgeois democratic revolution and not the bourgeoisie, as had been the case in the West.

Owing to its proletarian leadership and proletarian methods of fighting tsarism, Lenin described the first Russian revolution as a *proletarian* revolution. At the same time he also called it a *peasant* revolution, as he considered the agrarian question, i.e., the abolition of landlordism, to be the economic basis and a particular national feature of the first Russian revolution. The peasants' revolutionary struggle for land was an important component of the programme of the general democratic movement.

It must be remembered, too, that the first Russian revolution aroused the people throughout the land, whatever their nationality. The local proletariat and peasantry in the oppressed, distant provinces of Russia threw in their lot with the Russian working class and with the Bolshevik party—the staunch champion of the interests of the working class and of the equality of all peoples.

Thus, the first Russian revolution, which was bourgeois in character but which had democratic aims, was a truly popular revolution according to its driving forces. In the epoch of imperialism, it was not an end in itself any more but an important stage in the process of struggle between socialism and capitalism.

The Bolsheviks charted their political course on the basis of the character, specific features and driving forces of the first Russian revolution.

2. The Bolshevik Party's Strategy and Tactics in the First Russian Revolution

THE PROLETARIAT—LEADER OF THE REVOLUTION

Studying the epoch of imperialism and the changed political role that different classes now had to play in the struggle for democracy, Lenin came to the conclusion that every requisite was there for the Russian working class to become the leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Firstly, by dint of its role in the production process, the Russian proletariat, like the proletariat in other countries, was the most advanced and consistently revolutionary class of society.

Secondly, the Russian proletariat wanted the revolution to succeed because it stood to gain democratic freedoms, and could build up its organisations thus making it easier for the workers to defend their rights; it stood to gain experience in guiding the people and to win their support for the prospective socialist revolution.

Lastly, the Russian proletariat had a revolutionary Marxist party, which made it an independent political force.

However, it was not enough for the proletariat to take an active part in the democratic revolution to become its leader. To be able to do this, it had to have a reliable ally in the struggle.

The Mensheviks alleged that there were two political camps in Russia—the government camp and the democratic camp. Lenin did not agree with the Mensheviks. He held that there were not two but three political camps in Russia, as there were three main political forces. They were (1) the tsarist government, (2) the liberal bourgeoisie, and (3) the revolutionary proletariat.

The tsarist government headed the counter-revolutionary camp, to which belonged the autocracy, the landlords, the police, the army and the clergy, and their reactionary parties. Its aim was to suppress the revolution, whether by violence or deception, limited concessions, manoeuvring, etc., and preserve the monarchy intact.

The Bolsheviks regarded the tsar and the landlords as the main class enemy and believed that the principal task of the revolution at the bourgeois democratic stage was to overthrow the autocracy. Therefore, they aimed their main blow at that camp. The second political camp was headed by the liberal bourgeoisie, i.e., sections of the industrial bourgeoisie and bourgeois intelligentsia who were aware that tsarism and feudal survivals hampered the development of capitalism and who claimed a greater political role for themselves. Even so, this political camp did not want the monarchy to be destroyed but merely constrained by a constitution. That was why this section of the bourgeoisie were described as liberal monarchists. They sought to head the revolution and accomplish it by doing a deal with tsarism. It was not for nothing that Lenin called the Ca-

dets¹ (Constitutional Democrats—the main political party of the Russian bourgeoisie) “the worms in the grave of the revolution.”²

The task of the revolutionary Marxist party was to expose the instability and inconsistency of the liberal bourgeoisie and bar it from the leadership of the revolutionary forces, making the latter rally around the proletariat.

At the same time the Bolsheviks explained to the workers that it would be wrong to remain indifferent to the discontent and protest voiced by the democratic intelligentsia, by those of the liberal bourgeoisie who came out, in one way or another, against tsarism. Lenin wrote: “...the autocracy can maintain real peace only with a handful of highly privileged magnates from the landowning and merchant class, but in no sense with that class as a whole.”³ Accordingly, the Bolsheviks made a distinction between the liberal monarchist trend in bourgeois democracy, headed by the Cadets, and the revolutionary democratic trend (the Socialist Revolutionaries,⁴ national popular parties, and so on).

The Bolsheviks favoured forming a bloc with the revolutionary section of bourgeois democracy. Supporting every opposition movement, the Russian proletariat guided the revolutionary democratic struggle for an end to tsarism and for a democra-

¹ The Constitutional Democratic Party was founded in October 1905. Criticising isolated aspects of the autocracy, they tried to save tsarism by establishing a constitutional parliamentary monarchy.

² Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 10, p. 219.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol 8, p. 23.

⁴ The Socialist Revolutionaries took the form of a party in 1902, and were a union of Narodnik groups. They relied chiefly on the peasantry.

tic political and social system. Wherever they formed alliances, however, the Bolsheviks vigilantly guarded the class independence of the proletariat and its party and did not permit it to dissolve in bourgeois and petty bourgeois democracy. The Bolshevik Party supported bourgeois democracy only in so far as the latter actually opposed the autocracy. The Bolsheviks concluded no unqualified agreements with it, as the Mensheviks suggested should be done. The Mensheviks assigned to the Russian working class the role of the “navvy of the revolution,” trudging behind the bourgeoisie. As for the peasants, the Mensheviks regarded them as an indiscriminate reactionary mass.

But in fact, the progress and outcome of the revolution depended on whether the peasants would follow the proletariat and its revolutionary Marxist party.

The proletariat and peasantry were the worst oppressed classes of Russian society. Both were vitally interested in putting an end to reactionary oppression, overthrowing tsarism and establishing a democratic system. Their common interest in the struggle against oppression made it possible to consolidate them into one revolutionary force. Allied to, and under the guidance of, the working class the peasantry would be able to triumph over the hated enemy, the landlords, and make true its age-old dream of acquiring land and becoming free. From the other side, the proletariat, too, greatly needed the support of the peasantry, which made up the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia.¹

¹ About 97 million out of the total population of 125 million, at the start of the century.

Lenin pointed out the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. Recognising its relative instability (stemming from its uneven composition and private-ownership class mentality), compared with the proletariat, he at the same time distinguished it from the instability of the liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin insisted on drawing a clear distinction not only between proletarian and bourgeois democratism but also between different degrees of the latter. He wrote: "He would be a fine Marxist indeed, who in a period of democratic revolution failed to see this difference between the degrees of democratism. . . ."¹

Lenin showed that the position and aspirations of the peasantry were such as to dispose it to accept the leadership of the proletariat in the revolution. But, to carry through the revolution successfully, the party had in addition to achieve a firm alliance of workers and peasants.

The theory developed by Lenin on the leadership of the proletariat calls for the most active participation of the proletariat in effecting social and political reforms at the democratic stage of the revolution. To fulfil its leading political role in the revolutionary transformation of society, the proletariat must maintain its class and political identity, secure the support of loyal allies, and expose and isolate class collaborators and conciliators. In its fight for the democratisation of society and for improving living standards, the working class must never lose sight of the main thing, which is the necessity for taking over political power and effecting the socialist transformation of society.

The present-day growth of the working class and

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 52.

its improved organisation, the spread of Marxist-Leninist parties, the upsurge of the working-class movement, the broadening social base of the union of the proletariat and other progressive sections of society, and the increasing role being played by the proletariat in the national liberation struggles, all indicate that the working class is the main social and political force of our times.

The working peasantry, which constitutes the broadest, most numerous base of the movement for national liberation, has great revolutionary possibilities.

There are those petty bourgeois theorists who maintain that it is not the working class but the petty bourgeoisie or even the national bourgeoisie that must be the leading influence in the anti-imperialist struggle. They try to ingratiate themselves with the national liberation movement in order to foist their leadership on it and cut it off from the international working class and the socialist world system.

We can measure the contribution of the national bourgeoisie by taking an historical approach. To be able to judge correctly how revolutionary or counter-revolutionary the national bourgeoisie is, we must establish first of all at what historical stage it operates, what historical tasks the country is faced with and what socio-economic level it has reached, and what degree of activity and organisation the different classes and the people have achieved.

While a national liberation movement may originate under the leadership of any democratic class, it requires the leadership of the working class, allied with the peasantry and headed by a Marxist-Leninist party, to carry through democratic reforms and go on to socialism.

REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP

As Marxists, the Bolsheviks believed that there were two ways to carry out a revolution—by an armed uprising or by a more or less peaceful taking over of power.

Russia at that time, however, had no parliamentary body through which a non-violent struggle for power could be carried on. It was an absolute monarchy, despotic and cruel, and the tsar commanded the services of the army, the police and a large body of officials. Therefore the Bolsheviks considered that the only way tsarism could be overthrown was by an armed uprising.

The Bolsheviks did not demand armed insurrection no matter at what cost. They regarded such a call as being dependent on the concrete situation in the country. Lenin wrote: "Insurrection" is an important word. A call to insurrection is an extremely serious call. The more complex the social system, the better the organisation of state power, and the more perfected the military machine, the more impermissible is it to launch such a slogan without due thought... Important words must be used with circumspection."¹

Marxism regards armed uprising as a very serious matter calling for most careful thought. Referring to the Resolution on the Armed Uprising passed by the 3rd Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, Lenin pointed out that one of the Party's chief tasks was to organise the proletariat for the uprising, taking the most energetic measures to arm the workers and to direct the uprising. An uprising is neither a spontaneous act nor a result of a conspiracy. It is the extreme

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 367-368.

form of class struggle, and it must be based on a broad mass movement.

In preparing for an armed uprising, two aspects must be distinguished, namely, the general political aspect and the practical aspect.

To prepare an uprising politically means to see that the people are convinced from their own experience that armed struggle is necessary. To prepare for an armed uprising and to ensure that it would be nation-wide in its scope it was necessary that political aims be advanced which would give free scope to the revolutionary initiative of the people.

The unauthorised introduction of an eight-hour day in factories and of democratic reforms in the countryside represented a new tactical method of hampering the tsarist administration and stimulating the political activity and creative initiative of the people. The general political strike, which Lenin considered to be a most important factor in preparing for an armed uprising, was a new and formidable weapon in the hands of the proletariat.

It was extremely important that the uprising be well organised from the practical point of view. To ensure its success, the proletariat had to be armed, fighting groups had to be organised and drilled, and plans for the uprising had to be worked out.

An armed uprising is not an end in itself but a means towards the seizure of political power. The question of who is going to wield state power is the fundamental question in any revolution and consequently the Bolsheviks gave full attention to it.

Proceeding from the well-known definition of dictatorship given by Marx and Engels, Lenin showed the need to establish, in the course of a victorious

democratic revolution, a revolutionary people's dictatorship. In their analysis of the 1848 German bourgeois democratic revolution, Marx and Engels stressed that the revolution could have been victorious only if people's power had been established. The revolutionary forces should have taken power into their own hands and set up a provisional government bold enough and resolute enough to break the resistance of the reactionary classes and carry the revolution through to final victory. A government of this kind must rely on the revolutionary initiative of the people. It must carry out their will and deal firmly with the enemies of the revolution. Marx and Engels stressed that every temporary state structure appearing after a revolution required a dictatorship, and a vigorous one at that, to support it.

In applying this to Russia, Lenin emphasised that without a revolutionary dictatorship it would be impossible to break the resistance of the landlords, the capitalists and tsarism, and to beat off counter-revolutionary attacks. Lenin pointed out, however, that this revolutionary dictatorship was not yet the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat but a democratic dictatorship of the people.

The dictatorship of the people is a revolutionary dictatorship which can result solely from a victorious revolution. It is a democratic dictatorship which provides for a republican system of government and a redistribution of the land in favour of those who work it. A democratic dictatorship does not, however, demolish the foundations of capitalism. It plays the role of a political weapon in the hands of the people, helping them to carry through the revolution to final victory and establish the necessary conditions for a socialist revolution.

The social classes to be included in "the people" at the time of a democratic revolution are those that are oppressed by the existing political regime and economic system and who therefore have common interests and aims in the democratic revolution. In Russia, they were the proletariat and the peasantry, "...if we take the main, big forces, and distribute the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie (also part of 'the people') between the two."¹ So, people's dictatorship in Russia at that time meant a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Lenin considered it necessary that, in the course of the bourgeois democratic revolution, a provisional revolutionary government be set up to serve as the executive body of the workers' and peasants' revolutionary democratic dictatorship. Such a government was to begin democratic reforms, thus paving the way for a socialist revolution.

In answering the question, "Should representatives of the proletariat take part in the provisional revolutionary government?", Lenin said that it was permissible for the Social Democrats, in principle, to take part in such a government. But although it was permissible in principle, it was not necessarily always practicable. Whether it was practicable or not, depended on the specific circumstances, the alignment of class forces, and so on. One could determine beforehand only the character and aims of such participation—to fight the counter-revolution, consolidate and extend the revolutionary gains, champion the interests of the working class, and provide the essential conditions for carrying forward the democratic revolution to a socialist revolution.

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 56.

Lenin considered it necessary that the party should keep a watchful eye on its spokesmen in the provisional revolutionary government, and that the aim of complete socialist revolution should not be lost sight of for a moment. At the same time, Lenin stressed the need for constant pressure to be exerted from below on the government. To be able to exert this pressure, the proletariat must be armed, and it must be guided by the party. The purpose of the armed pressure was to guard, consolidate and extend the revolutionary gains.

The tactics of the party should be to ensure interaction between the revolutionary factors both "from above" and "from below," to subject the government to pressure from its own members representing the party of the proletariat, and, if need be, from the armed people as well.

Lenin also warned the party against dangerous leftist deviations, such as the substitution of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Lenin considered Trotsky's¹ slogan, "Without the tsar, and with a workers' government," pure political adventurism. Trotsky's slogan, so "left" in appearance, meant skipping the democratic stage of the revolution. Trotsky asserted that it was impossible to establish a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. He thought little of the peasantry as an ally of the working class and opposed the idea

¹ L. D. Trotsky (Bronstein) (1879-1940), took part in the Social Democratic movement from 1897. After the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, at which he sided with the Mensheviks, he actively opposed the Bolsheviks on every point of the theory and practice of proletarian revolution.

of proletarian leadership in an alliance with the peasantry.

The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry is transitional, temporary rule. Its task is to carry the bourgeois democratic revolution through to a successful conclusion. Since this is in the interests of both the working class and the peasantry as a whole, they have a common aim and are therefore prepared to take joint action.

The victory of the insurgent working people must culminate in the establishment of a revolutionary dictatorship whose class composition and forms of administration depend on the strategic stage, and also on the alignment of class forces in the country and internationally. The revolutionary government, as the executive body of the dictatorship, has the task of repulsing counter-revolutionary attacks, and consolidating the victory of the revolution and providing for its further advance. The stability of such a government depends on the strength of the union between the working class and the peasantry and other democratic sections of society, on consistent implementation of the tactics of the "bloc-of-the-left," and on a skilful combination of pressure "from above" and "from below" on the government with a view to carrying revolutionary reform further. At the same time, consistent struggle by the party of the working class aimed at consolidating the unity of the people requires the party to preserve and maintain its organisational, political and ideological identity in its contacts with its various allies.

In present-day conditions the creation of a united national front in countries fighting against the forces of imperialism for their national indepen-

dence and for social progress is a strategic problem, one of the further revolutionary reform. In many developing countries much has been done to strengthen the economy and political power, but the democratic forces are still not playing a big enough part in government. It is essential to find ways of uniting all the democratic forces, taking into consideration the individual features of each of the developing countries.

Some people question the possibility of broad democracy for the developing countries at the present stage, arguing that they are not yet capable of realising the full meaning of democracy. It is true that these countries have limited democratic traditions, but that does not mean that they can achieve economic and social progress without democracy. The active participation of the people, of all the democratic forces, in socio-economic progress ensures further revolutionary changes along the path leading to socialism.

"Communists favour the most democratic methods of preparing for and carrying out united action with all progressive, patriotic and peace-loving forces on a national, regional and international scale. They will do all they can to bring about greater mutual understanding between the numerous and diverse anti-imperialist trends and movements, taking into consideration their specific features and showing respect for their independence. Forms of cooperation, chosen freely and by common consent, will make it possible to raise the anti-imperialist struggle to a new level to meet the requirements of the present situation."¹

¹ *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Prague, 1969, p. 36.*

THE LENINIST THEORY FOR CARRYING FORWARD A DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION INTO A SOCIALIST ONE

Not only did Lenin provide the theoretical basis of the strategy and tactics of a Marxist party at the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution, but he also showed how to effect the transition of a democratic revolution to a socialist revolution.

Analysing the relation between a bourgeois democratic revolution and a socialist revolution, Lenin started out from the basis of the Marxist theory on uninterrupted revolution. As early as the 1850's, in the Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League (the very first international communist organisation), Marx and Engels wrote: "While the democratic petty bourgeoisie wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible... our task is to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less propertied classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has taken over the reins of state power."¹

Lenin pointed out that the transition from a bourgeois democratic revolution to a socialist revolution was necessary and natural. It was important not to stop at the democratic stage and limit the scope of the revolution to the tackling of bourgeois democratic objectives alone. He said that the triumph of the 1905 revolution would mark the finish of the democratic revolution and the start of a decisive struggle for a socialist revolution. It would mean that the democratic revolution could be carried forward speedily to a socialist revolution, without any intermediate stages between

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels. *Sel. Works*, Vol. 7, p. 261, Russ. Ed.

the ending of the one and the beginning of the other. In the changed historical conditions, under imperialism, the bourgeois democratic revolution and the socialist revolution were two stages of one revolutionary effort of the working class. Lenin wrote: "...from the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way."¹

Examining the character, specific features and perspective of the first Russian revolution, Lenin noted, in the first place, the existence in Russia of objective conditions for the carrying forward of the bourgeois democratic revolution to a socialist revolution. The democratic revolution was carried out in Russia in the imperialist era, in a situation where the whole people were engaged in a struggle against feudal survivals—landlordism and tsarism in particular—and where the proletariat was fighting against capitalist slavery.

The success of a bourgeois democratic revolution, resolving the first group of socio-economic contradictions, still fails to bring into proper balance the productive forces and relations of production. As it resolves one set of social contradictions, it lays bare and sharpens still further other contradictions, thus making inevitable the further advance of the bourgeois democratic revolution and its transition into a socialist revolution.

Lenin's theory of the development of the bourgeois democratic revolution into a socialist revolution showed the error of the tactics of the West European opportunists and Russian Mensheviks.

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 236-237.

Both of these groups rejected the idea of the leadership of the proletariat and the policy of alliance between the working class and the peasantry. They refused to recognise the revolutionary possibilities of the large semi-proletarian group in town and country, asserting that conditions would not be ripe for a socialist revolution until the proletariat had become the majority of the nation. For this reason the Mensheviks favoured the theory which prevailed among Social Democrats of the 2nd International—the theory that between the bourgeois democratic revolution and the socialist revolution lies a long period of bourgeois government.

In the early period of capitalism, bourgeois revolutions were carried out when the level of industrial development was still low and when the proletariat was not leading an independent class struggle. That made a long period of civil war and international conflict inevitable, Marx and Engels pointed out. In the changed historical conditions a long transitional period like that is unnecessary. Transplanting this scheme into the imperialist era was mere dogmatism and was, in fact, a rejection of proletarian revolutionary struggle.

The fact that two social wars were going on at the first stage of the proletarian revolutionary struggle did not, however, imply that they were equal in importance.

The struggle of the whole people for democracy was central to the initial stage of the Russian revolution. The more rapidly and fully democratic transformation proceeded, the nearer the struggle for socialism approached. The path to socialism lies through democracy. "Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at conclusions

that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense," wrote Lenin.¹

In 1905, Trotsky propounded his theory of "permanent revolution," which he claimed to be a continuation of the ideas of Marx and Engels on uninterrupted revolution. According to this "theory," the Russian bourgeoisie, because of Russia's economic backwardness, was unable to do what the bourgeoisie of Western Europe had done. To Trotsky, Russia's industrial backwardness was a political asset rather than a drawback. From the "dialectics of backwardness" it followed that nobody but the proletariat could carry out a bourgeois revolution in Russia. Seizing power, the proletariat was to keep hold of it and carry on the revolution "permanently," until socialism had triumphed at home and abroad. Trotsky asserted that the two revolutions—the bourgeois democratic revolution and the proletarian socialist revolution—did not develop one into the other but converged and blended into one. The working class, he maintained, would take the leadership at the outset and would then make a leap from industrial backwardness into socialism.

Lenin's argument with the supporters of Trotsky's "permanent revolution" theory was not over the question of continuity, for Lenin himself upheld Marx's theory of uninterrupted revolution. He criticised them because they underrated the peasantry as the principal ally of the proletariat and denied the idea of proletarian leadership. For this reason Lenin described the Trotskyist theory as semi-Menshevik, for while it borrowed from the Bolsheviks the call for vigorous revolutionary action by the proletariat, it borrowed from the Men-

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 29.

sheviks their rejection of the role of the peasantry.

As it ignores the objective general law of the development of the democratic revolution from a lower to a higher stage, Trotskyism seeks to isolate the proletariat from the people, severing it from its democratic allies. In this way Trotskyism breeds sectarianism and foredooms the working class to failure, whether in the struggle for democracy or socialism.

Lenin warned that a democratic revolution does not automatically grow into a socialist revolution. This comes about only as a result of an organised struggle by the working class and the people of a country against the bourgeoisie and class-collaborators, who want to halt the progress of the revolution. This makes clear the special role of the Marxist party which is called upon to lead and organise the revolutionary struggle, and shows the importance of its tactics to the carrying forward of the revolution. The class struggle under the leadership of a Marxist party is an essential condition of the success of a bourgeois democratic revolution and of its transition into a socialist revolution.

Lenin's great contribution in this respect was that he not only clearly defined the correlation between the bourgeois revolution and the socialist revolution in the imperialist era, but described in a new way the re-alignment of class forces with reference to the proletariat at the period of the further development of the revolution.

Passing to the socialist stage implied a qualitative change in the character and content of the revolutionary movement, and this meant a re-alignment of the political forces which formed a united front at the democratic stage. The class contradictions present within the democratic bloc become prominent and their resolution depends on the

alignment of political forces, both internal and international, and on the struggle for leadership of the movement. The outcome of this struggle largely determines the outcome of the revolution itself.

The alliance of the working class and peasantry is the force capable of bringing about the victory of the socialist revolution. Lenin repeatedly pointed to the uneven composition of the working peasantry. It included the poorest peasants, i.e., the exploited, the agrarian semi-proletariat, and the middle peasants, small-scale farmers who exploited no hired labour—or nearly none. Being petty bourgeois by virtue of their position, the middle peasants may be disposed to side with the kulaks.¹ Then the task of the proletariat is to prevent this from happening, to paralise their instability, making them at least neutral in the struggle waged by the proletariat against the urban bourgeoisie and the kulaks. It is necessary to prevent the middle peasants from going over to the side of the bourgeoisie, and finally to win their support after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established, and to conclude a durable alliance with them.

At the same time, the middle peasants, who are also the victims of capitalist oppression, are interested in seeing the capitalist system abolished, and may give their support to the proletarian revolutionary struggle from the start. In that case, the proletariat, while relying on the poor peasants, will conclude a stable alliance with the middle peasants to fight the urban and rural bourgeoisie.

Lenin wrote that the proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush

¹ The kulaks were the rural bourgeoisie—capitalist entrepreneurs in agriculture, using hired labour.

the autocracy's resistance by force and paralise the instability of the bourgeoisie. As regards the socialist revolution, this must be accomplished by the proletariat allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralise the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

The proletariat, said Lenin, stood "at the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry—for complete freedom, for a continuing democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and the exploited—for socialism!"¹

At the same time Lenin's thesis on the re-alignment of class forces must not be reduced merely to a differentiation of the peasantry or to the attitude the middle peasants may take in the struggle for socialism. Lenin's approach implies a variety of patterns of the alignment of classes and social groups when passing from the democratic to the socialist stage of the revolution. Everything depends on the concrete historical circumstances in which the revolution takes place.

"The struggle for democracy is a major component of the struggle for socialism"—this is the strategic line pursued by communist and workers' parties under present conditions. It is an expression of the basic line of leading the people towards the socialist revolution from their involvement in an all-embracing democratic movement.

The democratic goals, the rate of progress of the revolution, and the methods of acceding to power of the working class vary from country to country according to the different specific historical features and traditions. That is why in some countries

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 100, 114.

there may be or may have to be transitional stages in the process of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, and why the political organisation of a society building socialism may take a variety of forms. The significance of this is that it reveals more fully the dialectics of the progress of the revolution from the bourgeois democratic to the socialist stage, prompting communist parties to apply revolutionary theory flexibly to concrete historical situations in their countries.

The 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union noted that: "Imperialism is being subjected to ever greater pressure by the forces which have grown out of the national liberation struggle. The main thing is that the struggle for national liberation in many countries has in practice begun to develop into a struggle against exploitative relations, both feudal and capitalist. The countries which have taken the non-capitalist path of development, that is, those which have taken the long-term line of building a socialist society, are the advance contingent of the present-day national liberation movement."¹

The changed alignment of political forces in the international arena—the world socialist system, its growing economic and political influence and all-round assistance to the national liberation struggle, the growing activity and organisation of the international working class, consolidation of the international communist movement in the struggle against imperialism, etc.—favours the development and carrying forward of the anti-monopoly movement to a socialist revolution.

An important process, qualitative as well as quantitative, is developing at the present time. Not

only are the main revolutionary forces expanding, but they are drawing closer together as regards their social objectives. With the socialist countries now representing a third of mankind, with the working class, led by communist parties, having become a powerful world force, and with the national liberation movement's struggle against capitalism, the issue of the nature of the unity of these basic revolutionary forces emerges in a new light. Besides the anti-imperialist struggle—still the paramount task in the current period—they are united today by common long-term social aims, which open up new promising possibilities for all revolutionary forces.

Consequently, the democratic and the socialist revolutions are drawing closer and closer together, although distinctions between them (in content, in the alignment of class forces, and so on) still remain.

Yet, however objective this process of the drawing together of the democratic and the socialist stages, increasing significance now attaches to the subjective factor, above all to the existence of strong Marxist-Leninist parties enjoying solid mass support and pursuing a flexible and intelligent policy, not on the basis of some cut-and-dried scheme, but bearing in mind the specific conditions and historical experience of each country and the general laws governing the development of the class struggle.

¹ 24th Congress of the CPSU, Moscow, 1971, p. 215.

3. The Part Played by the Bolsheviks in the First Russian Revolution

The development of the revolution in Russia called for a reorganisation of party work and of the party itself, for different forms and methods of work among the people. In March, 1905, Lenin wrote: "...we must reckon with the growing movement, which has increased a hundredfold, with the new tempo of the work, with the freer atmosphere and the wider field of activity. The work must be given an entirely different scope. Methods of training should be refocussed from peaceful instruction to military operations. Young fighters should be recruited more boldly, widely, and rapidly into the ranks of *all and every kind* of our organisations. *Hundreds* of new organisations should be set up for the purpose without a moment's delay."¹

On his return to Russia from emigration early in November, 1905, Lenin immediately joined in the party's revolutionary activities.

In spite of obstacles and police persecution Lenin was always among the people, in the thick of the developments. He delivered lectures for political educators, visited workers' secret groups and held discussions with them on points of tac-

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 218-219.

tics, spoke at party and workers' meetings, addressed meetings attended by members of the professions and students, spoke in the Clerks' and Book-Keepers' Union, in the Shop Assistants' Union, wrote for the Bolshevik press, etc. In one of his articles, "The Reorganisation of the Party" (1905), Lenin proposed to party organisations a range of new specific tasks, bearing in mind the changed conditions in which the party had to work.

First, it was necessary to apply the elective principle in the party more broadly while preserving the old secret apparatus. "...the task is clear," wrote Lenin, "to preserve the secret apparatus for the time being and to develop a new, legal apparatus."¹

Second, with the extension of the elective principle in the party, new forms of organisation had to be found. Lenin proposed that these questions be discussed at party meetings and that the old workers' circles be developed into party associations, organisations and groups. Each of them was to elect a bureau or board as its standing executive body. Lenin also proposed that the party should set up dining-rooms, teashops, libraries, etc., to be used as centres for mass education, and that it should make more use of intellectuals, sending them to the "backwoods," to meet the people at grass-root level.

Third, it was necessary to influence workers in their separate factories to combine into united Social Democratic organisations. The division of workers into different factions was harmful to the revolutionary movement, and it was necessary to get them to unite effectively and not just in

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 10, p. 30.

words. Preparations were launched on a national scale for the calling of the 4th Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, the purpose of which was to unite the party.

In the changed conditions of work Lenin attached particular importance to self-criticism. "... self-criticism is vitally essential to every live and virile party," he wrote. "There is nothing more disgusting than smug optimism. There is nothing more warranted than the urging of attention to the constant, imperative necessity of deepening and broadening, broadening and deepening, our influence on the masses..."¹

The Bolshevik party's experience showed that correct strategy and tactics, improved forms of organisation, and a clear-cut positive programme of action were indispensable to the party's militancy and capacity to carry with it the broad mass of the people at the decisive point in class battles.

THE PROLETARIAN STRIKE MOVEMENT, THE SOVIETS, AND THE TACTICS OF THE "BLOCK-OF-THE-LEFT"

The effort to consolidate and extend ties with the people is always essential, but never more so than at the point of a revolutionary outburst. The working class has an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action, and the important thing is to direct its revolutionary energy into the right channel. The paramount question at this stage, Lenin said, was where the political centre of gravity should lie with respect to the workers' education and organisation.

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 8, p. 452.

The gauge of the people's struggle in Russia was the strike movement. It became ever more stubborn and vigorous and was highly organised. Economic strikes interlinked with political strikes, developing into mass action. In some places, police and troops were called in, and armed clashes occurred.

The revolution showed that the significance, role and strength of the working class in the struggle did not depend on whether it made up a majority of the population, but on its revolutionary energy, political awareness and ability to head the people's revolutionary struggle.

The activities of the party organisation of the Bryansk Engineering Factory, one of the largest of its kind in Russia, afford a good example of the leading role played by the working class in the revolutionary movement. Situated just between the Moscow industrial district and the Black Earth agrarian provinces, the Bryansk factory, with its thousands-strong work force, was an important proletarian centre exerting a revolutionising influence on a large area in Central Russia.

In late February, 1905, a strike was called at the Bryansk factory, which lasted for thirty-six days. The party organisation directed the work of the strike committee, organised mass meetings and demonstrations and set up pickets and workers' patrols. Bolsheviks carried on day-to-day work in all the shops and departments of the factory, working hard to ensure that the strike would proceed in an organised fashion and at a vigorous pace, and that it would promote the revolutionary education of the workers.

Following the example of the Bryansk engineering workers strikes were called at other factories in the area and there was an intensification

of disturbances in the villages nearby. The party organisation of the Bryansk factory set up a special department responsible for conducting work in the villages. They sent activists there and issued special leaflets for the peasants. As a result, peasants' committees were set up in many villages, and the peasants' movement became more organised.

Bryansk factory Bolsheviks conducted educational work among the troops of the Bryansk garrison, office workers, intellectuals, young people and women. In the summer of 1905, they organised party groups in all major enterprises in the district.

The party organisation took charge of arming and drilling the workers, forming them into combat squads, and preparing the people for the decisive attack on the autocracy. In December, 1905, the Bryansk factory combat squads, together with similar groups from other factories, seized arms from the government depots and released political prisoners from the Bryansk prison.

From December, 1905 to May, 1906, in a large area of Central Russia, power belonged in fact to the revolutionary people supported by workers' armed squads. At the Bryansk factory, the workers themselves introduced an eight-hour working day, abolished the existing system of fines and searches, introduced free school education for the workers' children, opened a workers' club, legalised demonstrations, meetings and public organisations, and set up a workers' militia. The Factory Soviet of Workers' Deputies, led by Bolsheviks, gradually emerged as a body of revolutionary power, to be reckoned with by the police and factory management. On the initiative of the Soviets, workers previously sacked for taking

part in the strike were reinstated, and concrete measures were taken to overcome unemployment. At the demand of the Soviets, the management declared May 1 a non-working day.

Beginning with the summer of 1905, semi-legal workers' trade unions began to spring up throughout Russia. Bolsheviks took an active part in their establishment and activities. The unions, which were led by revolutionary Social Democrats, represented from the start militant class organisations of the proletariat. Along with defending workers' economic interests, they also advanced political demands. The fighting unity of the proletarians and the mass of the working people of multinational Russia grew and strengthened. In Finland,¹ workers set up Red Guards formations and compelled the tsarist administration to publish a manifesto on Finland's autonomy, granting universal suffrage and democratic freedoms to the Finnish people.

In a situation of mounting revolution, when rallies, demonstrations and workers' meetings were being held and conferences of representatives of diverse public organisations convened, the Bolsheviks openly addressed the people, expounding the party programme and urging industrial workers and other working people to fight for its implementation. Availing themselves of the comparative freedom the developing revolution had brought, Bolshevik organisations published workers' newspapers, leaflets and Marxist books. The monthly printing of leaflets exceeded a million copies.

¹ Finland was a province of the Russian Empire from 1809 to 1917. In December, 1917, it was granted independence in line with the Leninist nationalities policy.

The growing strength of the Bolshevik party showed that its influence was increasing. Towards the end of 1905, the Petersburg party organisation had a membership of nearly 3,000, the Moscow party organisation numbered 2,500 members, and so on. At that time in Russia (in its industrial centres for the most part) active revolutionary work was carried on by over fifty Bolshevik party committees and groups. Rallying around them were thousands of workers who did not belong to the party, but shared its revolutionary ideas and supported it.

Hoping to divert the people from the revolutionary struggle by temporary concessions and promises, the tsarist government, in August, 1905, issued a manifesto on the convention of a Duma. This quasi parliament was not to have any legislative powers but was to play the role of a consultative body to the tsar. Only members of the exploiting classes—landlords, capitalists and some of the rich farmers—were eligible for election to the Duma. The Bolsheviks saw through this trick of the government. Lenin called the tsar's manifesto a mockery of the idea of popular representation. At that difficult moment the Bolsheviks were the only political party in Russia to call upon the people to have nothing to do with the Duma. The Bolshevik tactics of boycotting the Duma was supported not only by the workers but also by the peasants and a section of the intellectuals. The plan to set up a Duma was a signal failure. Constitutional illusions were swept away by the revolutionary flood; the struggle flared up everywhere, even in the street. The Bolsheviks were mustering revolutionary forces to stage political mass strikes and prepare for an armed uprising.

An important point in the Bolshevik tactics was to select the time and the place for staging a *general political strike*. The action began in Moscow, in September, 1905, with a printers' strike. It rapidly developed into a general political strike involving the whole of Moscow. The action of the Moscow proletariat gave rise to the October general strike which spread all over Russia and in which more than two million workers took part.

The October strike developed into a powerful political movement of the proletariat with the aim of overthrowing the autocracy by force of arms, boycotting the Duma, and establishing a democratic republic. These Bolshevik objectives were highly popular. They inspired the people to revolutionary activity. The strike paralysed the administration and threatened to destroy the very foundations of the autocracy. The tsar's family made preparations to escape abroad. Kaiser William II of Germany sent a fleet to Russian waters with instructions to take on board the Russian monarch with his family and retinue.

The all-Russia political strike of October, 1905, represented a new form of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. For the first time in Russian history, some political freedoms were gained. The proletarian party won the right to have its own press, and numerous trade unions and cultural and educational workers' associations came into being.

Lenin insisted that all legal means should be used, and that the people should take an active part in the trade-union movement. He opposed the isolation of the Social Democratic trade unions and recommended the unions to unite and act together.

In the course of the first Russian revolution, particularly during the stormy all-Russia political strike in October, the working class created Soviets of Workers' Deputies—bodies of revolutionary struggle without parallel in the world revolutionary movement. The first Soviet was set up as early as May, 1905, in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, a Russian textile industry centre. After that, Soviets began to be set up everywhere in Russia.

Soviets emerged on the initiative of the people. These organisations, Lenin said, were created solely by revolutionary sections of the population, without regard to any laws or norms, in a wholly revolutionary way, as a product of independent popular initiative. Soviets were not invented by any political party. They were brought into being by the revolution itself. It was to this popular initiative that the Soviets owed their strength and their great role in the revolution.

Lenin described the Soviets as the beginnings of a new kind of government, as bodies of the democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry. The Soviets acted as revolutionary authorities: they enforced freedom of the press, introduced an eight-hour working day, and called on the people to refuse to pay taxes to the tsarist government. In some instances the Soviets confiscated money from the capitalist banks and used it for the needs of the revolution.

The Mensheviks regarded the Soviets merely as bodies of workers' self-government, as rudiments of a parliament set up without an armed overthrow of tsarism. They did not want the Soviets to become bodies of revolutionary power and actively sought to prevent this from happening. For example, they prevented the Petersburg Soviet of

Workers' Deputies, which they happened to head, from playing a leading part in the 1905 revolution.

Bolshevik-led Soviets, such as the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, on the other hand, became centres of active preparation for the armed uprising.

Three-quarters of all the Soviets were headed by Bolsheviks or influenced by them.

The Soviets demonstrated the success of the Bolshevik tactics of uniting all the "left"-bloc forces, by which term the Bolsheviks meant the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, minor clerks and the democratic elements of the intelligentsia. In terms of party affiliation these forces included the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, various local Social Democratic parties and the Socialist Revolutionaries. The Bolsheviks were the only consistently revolutionary element in this democratic camp. The petty bourgeois democrats wavered between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie, and between the revolutionary Social Democrats and the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats).

Lenin held that the Soviets should become the political centre for the whole of Russia and that they should include in their composition the Social-Democrats and the revolutionary element of bourgeois democracy. In his article, "Our Tasks and the Soviets of Workers' Deputies," Lenin wrote, "...unless the proletariat and the peasantry unite and unless the Social-Democrats and revolutionary democrats form a fighting alliance, the great Russian revolution cannot be fully successful."¹

Lenin also observed that deputies to the Soviets

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 10, p. 24.

should be elected in the proportion of roughly ten intellectuals to every hundred workers, peasants and soldiers. Lenin considered this a rational composition of the Soviets because they were carrying out a programme supported by all the classes and groups mentioned. These proposals of Lenin's embodied the conception of a multi-party system.

Lenin defined the Bolsheviks' "bloc-of-the-left" tactics as essentially designed to "force" the democratically-minded people (the peasantry and related sections of the petty bourgeoisie) to pursue a line of "common action" by workers and democratically-minded peasants, against both the tsarist regime and the wavering counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie.

The "bloc-of-the-left" tactics had numerous forms, such as joint appeals to the people, cooperation in mass organisations (Soviets, trade unions, strike committees), cooperation in the Duma election campaigns, and so on. Temporary agreements that were reached in principle on certain points did not limit the independence of the bloc members.

Usually emerging as organisations for conducting strikes, the Soviets, in the course of the revolution, became centres from which the uprising was directed. Lenin saw the Soviets as bodies of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry. With the proletariat playing the leading role in the Soviets, these bodies, given certain conditions, were to develop into the executive bodies of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat. The Soviets of 1905 were the forerunners of Soviet government, the political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat that was established in October, 1917.

FURTHERING THE UNION OF THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PEASANTRY. THE PARTY'S AGRARIAN PROGRAMME

Following the revolutionary action of the Russian proletariat, a strong peasant movement sprang up in Russia in the spring of 1905. Taking the law into their own hands, the peasants seized land and granaries from the landowners, burned down their property, felled their timber and demanded lower rents. When work in the fields was due to begin, the peasants staged strikes, refusing to work for the landowners. These combined forms of struggle reflected the fact that capitalist and semi-feudal forms of exploitation both existed in the Russian countryside.

In some places, influenced by the workers' movement and the educational work carried out by the Bolsheviks, the peasants made political demands. They demanded a popular assembly, democratic freedoms, compulsory primary education, and an amnesty for political prisoners.

As early as the summer of 1905, in some places in the Baltic area and Transcaucasia, for example, the peasant movement had many of the features of an armed uprising. The peasants refused to obey the laws of the tsar, drove out his officials, and burned village offices. Effective power passed into the hands of the peasant committees. In some rural districts, after the example of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, they set up Soviets of peasants', soldiers', and Cossacks' deputies.

On October 31, 1905, an interesting document appeared, called the Decree of the Peasants of the Village of Markovo, in the Moscow area. The Decree, signed by sixty delegates who could read and write, described the suffering of the people. Not only did they have to endure poverty and

hunger, but those taking part in the struggle for freedom and for the possession of the land were sentenced to prison and hard labour. Many were shot, hanged or in other ways done to death. The peasants declared that they were joining the emancipation struggle and presented their demands.

Three days later, the Decree was approved by the *volost*¹ meeting which further urged the need to overthrow the autocracy and to call a Constituent Assembly. The *volost* was declared a republic, and the head of the village was elected president. The government of the Markovo Republic was formed on the spot and included the agronomist, the head of the *volost*, a Moscow lawyer, a member of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, the local teacher and a farmer. They were pronounced ministers and obliged to wear a band across one shoulder when attending meetings.

Leaders of the Markovo Republic were included in the All-Russia Peasants' Union, a revolutionary democratic organisation founded in 1905. Lenin said that this "was a genuinely popular, mass organisation, sharing, of course, a number of peasant prejudices, and susceptible to the petty-bourgeois illusions of the peasants... but it was undoubtedly a real organisation of the masses,... unquestionably revolutionary at bottom, capable of employing genuinely revolutionary methods of struggle. It did not restrict but extended the scope of the political initiative of the peasantry."²

News of the Markovo Republic went around Russia. Early in November the full text of the

¹ *Volost*—an administrative unit in Russia until 1929.

² Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 10, p. 52.

Decree was printed by many of the Moscow newspapers, and then 500,000 copies of it were printed separately. Similar Decrees were then passed by other villages and *volosts*.

The Decree became known abroad. It was published by newspapers in France and the United States as the Peasant Manifesto. In November, 1905, a Chicago University professor set off for Russia to study the Markovo Republic.

The Decree was implemented stage by stage. The peasants cut down trees for public needs in the landowner's woods. In winter they began to divide the landlord's land. They refused to pay rent and to obey the authorities. Visits of the Governor-General and the territorial head administrator had no effect on the peasants. The Markovo Republic survived for nearly a year.

On the whole, however, the peasant movement was still spontaneous. Most peasants did not see clearly that to get rid of the landowners they had first to overthrow tsarism and seize power in alliance with the working class and under its leadership. Many peasants favoured the idea of a constitutional monarchy for Russia.

It was very difficult to conduct revolutionary work in the villages. Bolshevik organisations were few and far apart. Secrecy was hard to observe. The illiterate peasants did not grasp things easily. Bolshevik organisations set up special study groups to train progressive workers who had relatives in the countryside for conducting educational work there. They also organised travelling parties who carried out full-time educational work in the countryside.

In some villages Social-Democratic circles sprang up. Agrarian groups in town and city party committees worked to set up village So-

cial-Democratic organisations. Lenin wrote: "Our ideal is purely Social-Democratic committees in all rural districts, and then agreement between them and all revolutionary-democratic elements, groups, and circles of the peasantry for the purpose of establishing revolutionary committees."¹

City party organisations regularly published brochures and leaflets specially for village distribution. Lenin's brochure *To the Rural Poor* was reprinted many times. At a conference, the Moscow district organisation drew up a letter addressed to the local Social Democrats, entitled "On the Organisation of Village Committees." Close cooperation helped to improve party work in the countryside.

At the time of the first Russian revolution the Bolsheviks paid particular attention to the further elaboration of the agrarian programme of the party.

The Bolsheviks worked out their agrarian programme so that it should promote the development of the class struggle in the countryside and draw the peasants into the revolutionary movement on the side of the working class, and under its leadership. Lenin wrote: "We hold that the class struggle is the main factor also in the sphere of agrarian relationships in Russia. We base our entire agrarian policy (and, consequently, our agrarian programme as well) on unswerving recognition of this fact..."² Defence of the principle of development of the class struggle made the Bolsheviks' agrarian programme entirely different from the programme of the bourgeois-landowner and petty bourgeois parties.

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 238.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 148.

The Marxist agrarian programme was based on the character of the agrarian relationships in the country, the level of development of productive forces in agricultural production, and the forms of landownership. In short, it was based on a thorough study of the objective conditions, not on any abstract notions of justice.

The Bolsheviks elaborated their agrarian programme paying close attention to the actual state of Russian farming in order to see clearly what the peasants' struggle would and should be about in the course of a bourgeois democratic revolution.

On the one hand there were over ten million small farms which had hardly sufficient land. On the other hand there were a few thousand landowners who had vast tracts of fertile land. That was the starting point of the peasants' struggle for land. Large feudal estates were the cause of the land hunger, poverty, and exploitation of the peasants and the backwardness of agriculture. The relatively small rural bourgeoisie, exploiting labourers and renting land from landowners, wanted to have a chance to invest in land. On large estates labour productivity was low, the peasants renting land mostly on a share-cropping basis and working it with their own primitive implements. It was necessary to remove feudal survivals and let capitalism develop in agriculture.

It was objectively possible for a capitalist agrarian revolution, and so for capitalist development, to take either a revolutionary or a reformist path. The path of reform—of the gradual reorganisation of estates into capitalist holdings, of replacing feudal methods by capitalist methods—would have suited the landowners well enough,

but would have doomed the peasants to years of ruthless exploitation and capitalist bondage. The path of the revolutionary abolition of big estates—with a revolutionary government confiscating and dividing big feudal estates and the patriarchal peasant evolving into a capitalist farmer—met the interests of most peasants, as it gave scope to the productive forces.

Reflecting the aspirations of the peasantry and bearing in mind the objective needs of economic development, the party regarded *confiscation of land* from the landlords as the cornerstone of its agrarian programme.

The Bolsheviks also demanded *nationalisation of the land*. This was very important as it stemmed from the character of agrarian relationships in Russia and was supported by the people.

The slogan of nationalisation of the land fully reflected the vital needs of Russia's economic and political development. The peasant's instinctive desire for common ownership of the land was based on definite material reasons.

Firstly, nationalisation of the land would put an end to landlordism as such and prevented any restoration of feudal property.

Secondly, nothing but nationalisation of the land could finally free the peasant from the fetters of the medieval community and serfdom.

The abolition of private ownership of the land would remove those standing between the land and the man who worked it. It would bring down the price of produce and facilitate investment in agriculture, paving the way for the development of capitalism in agriculture and of the class struggle in the countryside.

Nonetheless, neither the Russian bourgeoisie nor the bourgeoisie of other countries dared to

carry out this measure. They were afraid lest the abolition of one form of property should be followed by the abolition of all other forms of property. Besides, the bourgeoisie had already become landowners and could not very well act contrary to their own interests. Other reasons for the reactionary position of the bourgeoisie with regard to the agrarian question were the sharp class contradictions in Russia and the great scope of the struggle of the proletariat which justly claimed leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The aim of nationalisation of the land included in the agrarian programme of the Bolsheviks rested on an objective analysis of the agrarian relationships and forms of landownership in Russia. Nationalisation of the land would make it possible to carry out such fundamental tasks as:

the revolutionary abolition of feudal relations of production by removing the landlords, that most reactionary class and the mainstay of the monarchy;

the broadest possible involvement of the majority of the peasantry in the struggle for land and for a bourgeois democratic revolution;

clearing the ground for a further development of the class struggle in the countryside, paving the way for the struggle for socialism.

Later on nationalisation was to facilitate the development of the bourgeois democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, and at the same time deal a crushing blow at the private ownership of the means of production as a whole. In working out its agrarian programme, the Bolshevik party also took into consideration the specific features of the revolutionary struggle at the current stage, bearing in mind the economic needs

and the character of political changes in Russia. Lenin stressed that political and agrarian changes must be in correspondence, and that radical agrarian reform was impossible without radical political reform. Unless there was real people's government, the peasants would never be able to keep the land expropriated from the landlords.

Another important thing the Bolshevik Party took into account was *the level of political consciousness, and the feelings and aspirations of the peasants.*

With regard to the *division of land*, at the bourgeois democratic stage of the Russian revolution, the party viewed the division of big estates among peasants as a measure which was progressive economically and politically but was not so effective and thorough as nationalisation. The simple division of the land—just adding a bit of the landowner's land to the peasant's farm—did not change the old system very much and provided no guarantee against the restoration of landlordism. Division of the land was less favourable than nationalisation for carrying forward the bourgeois democratic revolution to a socialist revolution. Nevertheless, while the party advocated confiscation and the nationalisation of the land, it did not completely reject the possibility of division. Lenin wrote: "Social-Democracy cannot undertake never to support division of the land. In a different historical situation, at a different stage of agrarian evolution, this division may prove unavoidable."¹

Lenin was sure that the victorious proletariat in other countries would be obliged to improve

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 13, p. 293.

the circumstances of the small farmer at the expense of the big landowners. In the first place, the plots rented by small farmers would have to be turned over to them for use without charge. In highly developed countries, he said, "large-scale farming can be preserved, and yet the small peasants can be provided with something of considerable importance to them."¹ The area to be divided and that to be retained by the proletarian government in order to set up on it state socialist enterprises, will depend on the standard of farming and the existence of a revolutionary-minded rural proletariat.

The Bolsheviks' agrarian programme, which reflected the interests and aspirations of the peasantry, helped the party to bring the working peasants together and draw them into active revolutionary struggle, thus strengthening the alliance between the working class and the peasantry.

THE PARTY'S WORK IN THE ARMY AND NAVY, MILITARY PREPARATION. THE DECEMBER ARMED UPRISING

After examining thoroughly the external and internal situation, the Bolshevik party arrived at the conclusion that the proletariat and the peasantry could only overthrow tsarism by armed force. To smash the formidable tsarist military-political machine required a no less formidable military force—a revolutionary army with a striking force of armed squads made up of representatives of the working class and the peas-

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 249.

antry, and also regular army and naval units won over to the side of the people.

Military preparation and work in the Army and Navy was an important part of the work conducted by the party.

Military preparation consisted in the organisation of armed detachments of workers and peasants, their training, manufacture and procurement of weapons and elaboration of the plan of the armed uprising.

The work in the Army and Navy was aimed at setting up Bolshevik party organisations there and winning soldiers and sailors over to the side of the revolution. This latter task was a difficult one, and success could be achieved only by disclosing the antagonism of the class interests of the soldiers and seamen and of the ruling exploiting classes.

Tsarist army officers were mainly members of the nobility and upper bourgeoisie. They were hostile to the revolution. But the Bolsheviks tried to establish contact with officers who were in opposition to the government, who wanted to serve the people honourably and who had broken off with the exploiting classes.¹ Officers, who had knowledge and specialised military training, could be of help at the moment when the army revolted and went over to the side of the people.

The main lines along which the Bolsheviks operated in the Army and Navy were as follows: setting up in the Army and Navy illegal Bolshevik organisations that would be able to head

¹ At the time of the first Russian revolution Lieutenant P. P. Schmidt headed a seamen's armed revolt at Sevastopol; Bolshevik officers A. P. Yemelianov and Y. L. Kokhansky commanded the military revolt at Sveaborg, a big fortress on the Baltic in 1906.

the struggle of revolutionary soldiers and sailors; making soldiers and sailors understand clearly the aims of the struggle and inculcating in them revolutionary staunchness and loyalty to the interests of the proletariat;

ensuring vigorous support of insurgent military units and vessels by workers' detachments;

isolating the reactionary officers;

penetrating barracks and naval ships by having workers fraternise with soldiers and sailors.

What circumstances promote the development and success of a revolutionary movement among the ranks of a standing army?

First of all, this depends on the scale of the class struggle being waged in the country, on how strong and well organised the proletariat is, and on how stubbornly and firmly it defends its class interests. Lenin wrote: "The workers' persistent struggle, the constant strikes and demonstrations, the partial uprisings—all these, so to say, test battles and clashes are inexorably drawing the army into political life and consequently into the sphere of revolutionary problems. Experience in the struggle enlightens more rapidly and more profoundly than years of propaganda under other circumstances."¹

Troops quickly get into a revolutionary frame of mind especially when the class struggle becomes sharper. To suppress the workers' and peasants' revolutionary movements, and then rebellious army units also, the government has to send more and more troops, using them against the people. That, in turn, opens the soldiers' eyes. The enlisted men learn from experience that they

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 351-352.

are mobilised and used exclusively to suppress the people.

Writing about the first Russian revolution, Lenin remarked that even the tsar's troops gradually began to see that they were being made to play the shameful role of suppressors of freedom, of henchmen of the police, and the army began to waver. At first there were isolated cases of insubordination, outbreaks among reservists, protests from officers, unrest among the soldiers, and refusals of some companies and regiments to shoot at their own brothers, the workers. Then part of the army sided with the uprising.

Mercilessly hounded and persecuted by tsarism, the Bolsheviks still carried on their illegal revolutionary work in the Army and Navy. The party organisations in military units coordinated their activities with those of the party in general. Their autonomy, however, went no farther than specialised military work. Mutual support and subordination of all work to general political objectives were what the military party organisations based their activities on. The nature of the work conducted in the Army was determined by the tasks put forward by the working class, the vanguard of the fighting people.

Thanks to the ideological and organisational influence of the Bolshevik party, to the dissemination of Marxist-Leninist ideas in the Army, and to the close cooperation of all military party organisations in that respect, the democratic sections of the Army sided with the uprising.

Propaganda and educational work was carried on in many forms, such as talks, meetings, mass meetings, the spreading of leaflets, and the publication of party and army newspapers. Bolshe-

vik military organisations published more than twenty different newspapers for soldiers.

Educational circles operated for politically aware soldiers and sailors, following roughly the same programme as was adopted for advanced workers' circles, but with more emphasis on the role of the Army. The work of explaining the party programme to the soldiers was carried on very carefully. Bolshevik party workers explained to the troops the cause of their hardships and why the officers had class privileges while they had no elementary rights. Dealing with the soldiers' demands, the Bolshevik activists linked these demands with the class struggle and showed that the autocracy was the root cause of the people's suffering.

The revolutionary struggles of the working class and peasantry and the Bolsheviks' explanatory work in the Army and Navy did a lot to revolutionise the troops, and some of the officers as well.

The revolt on the cruiser *Potemkin* (June, 1905) was the first mass manifestation of discontent in the armed forces.¹ Writing about it, Lenin said: "... the undoubted fact and the point of highest significance is that here we have the attempt to form the *nucleus of a revolutionary army*."²

¹ The revolt was prepared by a secret Bolshevik organisation. The entire Black Sea Fleet was sent to suppress it, but the solidarity of the sailors with those on the cruiser was so great that the ships had to be turned back. It was only because it had no support on land that the *Potemkin* had to sail for Romania where most of her crew were arrested.

² Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 8, p. 562. According to official records, from January 1905 to September 1906, there were 21 uprisings in the Army and Navy and 230 revolutionary actions, in which 124,000 soldiers and sailors took part.

On December 5, 1905, a conference of the Moscow Bolsheviks adopted a resolution on beginning a general strike which was to develop into armed struggle. "The future of Russia is at stake. It is life or death, freedom or slavery... Into the battle, Comrades—workers, soldiers and citizens!"—these words of the "Manifesto" published on December 7, 1905, by the *Izvestia*, the newspaper of the Moscow Soviet, were a declaration of war on tsarism. Moscow was covered by barricades. The centre of the uprising was in the workers' district of Krasnaya Presnya. The unequal war between a few thousand armed workers and picked regular army units went on for ten days. The government brought in troops on which it could rely from other places. The insurgents failed to win them over. The insurgents' defensive tactics, too, were a mistake. Attempts to support the Moscow uprising by armed action in other towns were isolated and were ruthlessly suppressed. The leaders of the uprising were arrested. The peasants failed to give support because there were no stable contacts between towns and villages. The treacherous behaviour of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who insisted on putting an end to the uprising at once, did enormous harm to it. The Bolsheviks considered that, although ripe politically, the uprising had not been organised well enough from a practical point of view. There were not enough arms or effective fighting units, and not enough experience of armed struggle.

The uprising in Moscow coincided with the first all-Russia party conference in Tammerfors, Finland. Lenin, who presided over the conference, made two reports—on the current developments in Russia and on the agrarian question.

The conference paid great attention to reports submitted by provincial organisations, which showed that the mounting revolutionary movement had reached the point where an armed uprising was imminent. On receiving news about the first armed clashes in Moscow, Lenin suggested closing the conference to enable the members to go home and take part in the uprising.

In the evening, on December 17, in St. Petersburg, the Central Committee of the party met and heard a detailed report from a representative of the Moscow Soviet on the situation in Moscow. On Lenin's suggestion, the Central Committee requested the Moscow Committee to cease further fighting.

The last order issued by the headquarters of the Presnya fighting forces ran: "We started it, now we end it. Blood, violence and death will dog our steps. But we don't care. The future is for the working class. Long live the workers' struggle and victory!"

The Presnya workers did not fight and die in vain. Lenin wrote: "The first breach was made in the tsarist monarchy; the breach was slowly but surely widened, weakening the obsolete, medieval regime. The heroism of the Moscow workers started a deep ferment among the urban and rural working people, the effects of which never died down, in spite of all persecution."¹

The Mensheviks had a different idea of the December armed uprising. Martov² declared that the uprising was "artificial."

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 373.

² L. Martov (Y. O. Tsederbaum) (1873-1923), one of the leaders of Mensheviks. During the first Russian revolution he took a conciliatory attitude, harmful to the interests of the working class.

Lenin said that those who called the December uprising artificial were artificial Social Democrats and the only fit place for them was a liberal bourgeois party. To the Mensheviks' "they should not have taken to arms," Lenin replied: "On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely."¹

In January, 1906, Lenin visited Moscow. The results of the uprising were discussed in the Moscow Committee of the party. Lenin spoke very highly of the heroism and courage of the Moscow workers. I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov² recalled that Lenin "listened avidly to every bit of news from Moscow. I still seem to see how his eyes glowed and how he smiled happily when I told him that in Moscow they were not at all downcast, the workers least of all. Indeed it seemed to be quite the contrary...."

Lenin never became despondent even if the setback was serious, for he could grasp the situation as a whole and could see how the struggle was going to develop further. That was why he was confident of final success. The Bolsheviks drew the necessary conclusions from the defeat of the December uprising which they regarded as their baptism of fire and an earnest of the ultimate success of the revolution.

Analysing the lessons of the uprising, Lenin and the Bolsheviks drew the following conclusions:

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11, p. 173.

² I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov (1870-1928), a Marxist writer, well-known for his translation into Russian of *Das Kapital* and other works by Marx and Engels. A party member from 1896.

an armed uprising is a very serious matter, and the time for the uprising must be carefully chosen to avoid any premature action in a situation that could put the proletariat at a disadvantage;

it is necessary to take to arms more resolutely and energetically, to ensure good military preparation, to explain to the people that freedom requires sacrifices;

the proletariat should try to prepare for a simultaneous armed uprising in all parts of the country. The proletariat of the capital did not necessarily have to start it, but must take part in it in order to rout the enemy in his stronghold;

the armed uprising in Russia confirmed the cardinal truth of Marxism that an uprising requires great skill and is not something that can be trifled with, and that once it has started it must be carried on with great determination and turned into an offensive;

at the critical moment of the uprising it was clearly not enough to conduct ideological explanation. The most energetic practical effort is needed to win over the troops.

After the December uprising the party paid still more attention to military preparation.

The methods by which armed detachments were organised, and their size and structure, all depended in the case of the Russian revolution on the concrete circumstances of the time. Of course these methods, etc., may be different in different circumstances. What there can be no doubt about, however, is that when an armed uprising occurs, the party must have a revolutionary army, fighting units, if it wants to carry out the tasks of the revolution.

THE CAUSES OF THE DEFEAT AND THE LESSONS OF THE
FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The 1905-07 revolution in Russia failed to achieve its immediate goal and ended in defeat. Why did it fail?

It failed, first of all, because there was no stable alliance between the working class and the peasantry. The alliance did form in the course of the revolution, as the struggle against the autocracy developed, but, Lenin wrote, "it was unorganised, inchoate, often unconscious."¹ Although the peasants' movement developed under the influence of the working class, it was scattered and was not aggressive enough. It lagged behind the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and was not linked with it as firmly as it should have been.

Only some of the peasantry set out in earnest to take land away from the landowners. Many still set their hopes on the "kind tsar." They believed the promises of the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) and supported the Liberals and took no part in the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat.

The weakness of the peasants' movement was revealed by the behaviour of the army, which consisted mainly of peasants. Most of the troops remained loyal to the autocracy and continued to allow themselves to be used to suppress the revolutionary people. Revolts in the Army and Navy were poorly organised and were politically immature.

The proletariat itself lacked cohesion and its actions were not well coordinated. The workers

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 15, p. 333.

failed to take vigorous economic action and to begin armed political struggle quickly, although the situation demanded these measures. That was their weakness.

The Mensheviks' break-away policy, together with a lack of unity among the working class and its vanguard—the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—had a disastrous effect on the outcome of the revolution.

All these factors combined to prevent the working class from playing its part as the leader of the revolution and from concentrating all its forces on destroying the tsarist regime.

The liberal bourgeoisie betrayed the revolution by making a secret deal with the monarchy at the decisive moment and so helping it to suppress the revolution.

Nor did the European bourgeoisie remain idle. Anxious about the fate of their money in Russia and about the possibility of the revolution spreading to Western Europe, French, English, Austrian, Belgian and other bankers granted the tsarist government a loan of 2,500 million francs to assist in the suppression of the revolution and the German imperialists prepared for armed intervention. The tsarist regime strengthened its position further by concluding peace with Japan in August, 1905, in Portsmouth with the assistance of the American government. International imperialism once again came to the rescue of one of its own kind, tsarist Russia, to the rescue of the landowners and the capitalists.

The revolution of 1905-07 was defeated. But the blood shed by the workers and peasants was not shed in vain. The revolution failed, but the working class showed that it might have succeeded. The revolutionary events were a school of in-

valuable experience for the people, and especially for the working class and the Bolsheviks, who learned how to wage political struggle. Lenin afterwards called the 1905 revolution the dress rehearsal of the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

In his article "The Lessons of the Revolution," Lenin said that the main lesson of the first Russian revolution was that only the revolutionary struggle of the people could bring about worthwhile improvements in the lives of the workers and in the administration of the state. No "sympathy" for the workers by educated people, no struggle of lone terrorists, however heroic, could do anything to undermine the tsarist autocracy and the entrenched power of the capitalists. This could be achieved only by the struggle of the workers themselves, only by the combined struggle of millions, and if this struggle weakened the workers would immediately begin to be deprived of what they had won.

The second lesson was that it was not enough to sap and restrict the reactionary regime. It had to be destroyed. Until that was done, all its concessions would be superficial and temporary. At the high tide of a revolution the reactionary forces retreat, but if the revolutionary pressure becomes weaker, those forces immediately rush back to their old position of dominance.

The third lesson was that the revolution made it possible to judge classes and parties, not from their fine phrases, but from their contribution to the struggle, from what they actually did. It revealed what their real aims were and what they were fighting for, and how vigorous and staunch they were in this fight.

The first Russian revolution showed the world

that the leading revolutionary force was the *industrial proletariat*. It was the first bourgeois democratic revolution to be led by the proletariat and in which the proletariat managed to organise joint action by the workers and peasants, even if it was not well enough coordinated. A militant union of the oppressed peoples of Russia took shape under the leadership of the proletariat. The revolution produced new forms of struggle. It resulted in the setting up of Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

The experience of the first Russian revolution clearly showed the proletariat to be capable of heading a general democratic movement even when, owing to capitalism being only partially developed, it forms the minority of the population. One of the most important lessons of the revolution was that it demonstrated that an alliance between the workers and the peasantry was essential to the success of the revolution.

From his analysis of the first Russian revolution, Lenin came to the conclusion—thereby adding something new in the history of Marxism—that in the epoch of imperialism a victorious bourgeois democratic revolution leads to the establishment of a government of the working class and the peasantry, not of the bourgeoisie, and that this new people's government is the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

The 1905-07 revolution made it clear that the national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples is part of the general democratic movement. The first Russian revolution demonstrated that it is both possible and necessary for working people of all nationalities to form a fighting alliance under the leadership of the proletariat and to

carry on a common struggle for their national and social emancipation..

"... these hard lessons will not have been in vain," Lenin wrote, noting that the Russian people were no longer the same as they were prior to 1905. "... The proletariat has taught them to fight. The proletariat will bring them to victory."¹

In the course of the revolution the people came to understand that only the party of the proletariat, the irreconcilable enemy of the autocracy, could lead them to victory over the monarchy and the landowners. The Bolsheviks gained very useful political experience from the revolution and learned how to organise the people. They emerged from the revolution ideologically steeled, better organised and more closely linked with the people. They had gained knowledge which enabled them to further develop Marxist theory. The revolution had struck a blow at the reformist views of the leaders of the Second International and their followers, the Russian Mensheviks.

The 1905-07 revolution, the first people's revolution of the imperialist era, introduced a new type of democratic revolution. The blow struck at tsarism by the Russian workers and peasants was also a blow at the whole of the imperialist system.

The first Russian revolution ushered in a new stage in the international working-class movement and exerted a powerful influence on the progress of the revolutionary movement throughout the world. The revolution in Russia aroused

the keen sympathy of the West European proletariat. The working class of Germany, France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and other countries demonstrated their solidarity with the Russian working class in their revolutionary struggle. Between 1905 and 1912, bourgeois revolutions took place in Iran, Turkey and China, and national liberation movements began to develop in India, Afghanistan, Indonesia and other countries.

The revolution of 1905-07 showed that Russia had become the focal point of the world revolutionary movement, and the Russian proletariat, its vanguard.

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 16, p. 304.

4. The Bolshevik Party in the Period of Reaction

The defeat of the first Russian revolution was only a temporary victory for tsarism. Nevertheless, the counter-revolution tried to consolidate its success by embarking upon a campaign of savage political reprisals. Punitive troops and courts-martial operated all over the country. Thousands of workers and peasants were executed and tens of thousands were sentenced to hard labour. The landowners and capitalists lost no time in taking revenge on the workers and peasants who had dared to stand up for their rights. The brutal reprisals were designed to put the very idea of revolution out of their minds forever.

The main blow of the reaction was aimed at the Bolshevik party. Many of its active members were sentenced to hard labour and others had to emigrate abroad. Rank-and-file members were also subjected to ruthless persecution. During that incredibly hard time many unstable elements, "fellow-travellers," members of the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie, left the party. The party was greatly depleted. The Petersburg organisation was reduced to almost one-third of its former strength, and the Moscow organisation to

one-fifth, while in other towns party organisations were reduced to one-tenth or one-fifteenth of their former size.

The enemies of the working class felt secure in their victory. But this was a mistake. Despite the savage persecution of the party and the desertion and wavering of unstable elements, the Marxist party of the working class continued the fight.

The special section of the security police in the Petersburg area ordered that Lenin be put on trial and that, in preparation for this, all available data concerning him be collected.

Lenin could not stay in Russia any longer and the Bolshevik centre decided to move the office of the party newspaper, *Proletary* (the Proletarian), which Lenin edited, abroad. So Lenin emigrated again in December, 1907. During the journey he noticed that he was being shadowed, so he got off the train quietly before arriving at his destination and walked twelve *versts*¹ in a biting frost, carrying his suitcase to the secret address where he was expected. He reached the place at two a.m., and finding that the ship that was to take him to Stockholm had already left, he decided to set off right away and walk across the Finnish Gulf to the port where the ship was to call. He was accompanied by two Finns. The ice was not very safe in some places, and it was by good fortune that they reached land safely.

Long, hard years as an emigré awaited Lenin abroad but he was ready for new trials. Despite some political prophecies that it would take at least a generation for the Russian revolutionary

¹ *Versta*—an old Russian measure of length, is equal to 1.0668 km.

forces to get over the defeat, their leader was confident that the revolutionary tide would soon rise again.

In those hard times Lenin determined the main task of that period—to preserve and build up the party, to maintain its ties with the people and to get ready for the coming battles. He also worked out the tactical principles to be followed by the Bolshevik Party and listed the concrete tasks to be carried out by a revolutionary party during a period of marking time in the revolution when the forces of reaction prevail.

AN ORGANISED RETREAT

After a defeat of a revolution, the first thing a revolutionary party must know is how to retreat properly, in an organised, orderly fashion, retaining its staunch members, preserving the unity of its ranks and keeping up its morale.

Every revolutionary party must know how to retreat properly. This is as essential as to know how to attack properly. Lenin wrote: "The revolutionary parties had to complete their education. They were learning how to attack. Now they had to realise that such knowledge must be supplemented with the knowledge of how to retreat in good order... and it is from bitter experience that the revolutionary class learns to realise this—that victory is impossible unless one has learned how to attack and retreat properly."¹ Unless it has learned how to retreat properly, a revolutionary party cannot hope for suc-

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 28.

cess in what is always a complicated and difficult struggle.

The chief obstacle in the way of safe retreat is caused by the opportunistic elements within the party who try to divert it from organised retreat onto an adventuristic path or one of unprincipled compromise. Either of these courses are tantamount to the liquidation of the party.

It is of the greatest importance at such times that the party should develop new tactics in keeping with the changed circumstances, and so it was for the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. For this purpose it was necessary: to subject the political situation in Russia to Marxist analysis, bearing in mind the new policy of the reactionary forces; to formulate the immediate tasks; to draw lessons from the revolution, and to find the correct balance between the party's legal and illegal kinds of work. Lastly, it was necessary to define the factors likely to give rise to a fresh revolutionary upsurge leading to another revolution.

When working out its new tactics during a period of reaction, a party must determine the attitude of each class and the relation in which all the classes stand to one another. The stand taken by a political party pinpoints the interests and attitude of its class. This was also the situation after the first Russian revolution, when the Russian bourgeoisie, frightened by the magnitude of the workers' revolutionary struggle, rushed to join the forces of reaction and the tsarist government.

The parties of the bourgeoisie, which, during the revolution, set out to speak "on behalf of the people" were openly hostile to the people as soon as the reactionary forces gained the upper hand.

They depicted the revolution as "madness," and turned their backs on the forms of struggle and organisation, the ideas, and the slogans produced in such abundance by the revolutionary epoch.

None of the aims of the bourgeois-democratic revolution (the overthrow of tsarism, the introduction of an eight-hour working day, the confiscation of land from the landowners) had been achieved, and yet the reactionary policy pursued by the tsarist regime clashed sharply with the needs of Russia's economic and political development. Therefore the Bolsheviks held that the struggle for attaining the objectives of the bourgeois democratic revolution had lost none of its urgency, that the revolution was historically inevitable, and that it was still the main strategic task of the workers' party to pave the way for it.

The means towards this end and the methods employed in the struggle could not, however, remain the same. Lenin worked out new tactics for the organised defence of the Bolshevik Party and for combining legal and illegal forms of work, and outlined the measures necessary to maintain the strength of the party.

COMBINING LEGAL AND ILLEGAL FORMS OF PARTY WORK

At the time when the reactionary forces were again in control, the methods of fighting the class enemy by a frontal attack, which had been effectively used during the revolution, had to be replaced by indirect methods of gathering, accumulating, organising and training the revolutionary forces for the next attack on tsarism, the landlords and the capitalists.

While the underground party organisations

were preserved and consolidated, every legal method of struggle was also used—the platform of the Duma, the trade unions, hospital and insurance funds, workers' cooperatives, clubs, libraries, conferences of liberals, and so on. At the same time the Bolsheviks were restoring and building up underground party committees and groups and perfecting secret methods of work.

Lenin elaborated a structure of secret party organisations which answered the need very well. Their main features were: first, rigorous centralism combined with as much democracy as the conditions of working underground allowed; second, unity with the people; third, absolute secrecy, ensured by strict discipline and careful specialisation of the underground work.

The main Leninist principle of underground work is to ensure an effective combination of illegal and legal methods. This principle stems from the nature of the Marxist party as a party of the people, which, although it is obliged by circumstances not to reveal itself, nevertheless always strives to make the working people aware of its existence and prefers to organise them and conduct educational work among them openly.

Getting a chance to work legally depends above all on the party itself. However reactionary the political regime in a country, it still has to set up mass associations and furnish a semblance at least of an electoral system, all of which creates the necessary conditions for revolutionary work. After the defeat of the first Russian revolution, tsarism, for instance, was obliged to set up a Duma. Also, it could not altogether ban the trade unions, various conferences which were in no way illegal, hospital funds and the labour press, and these limited opportunities of working

within the law were used by the Bolsheviks to organise and educate the working people.

It must be stressed that working legally requires as much skill as working secretly. Lenin wrote that it was necessary to learn to utilise legal opportunities just as zealously as to learn to use illegal methods of work.

To learn to use legal opportunities means to learn how to act in all kinds of organisations, even the most reactionary. It is necessary to master the use of allegorical language, and to know how to use every available loophole in the law, and so on. One has to know not only how to surmount the obstacles put up by the forces of reaction, but also how to overcome one's own reluctance, natural to a proletarian revolutionary, to resort to all sorts of manoeuvring in order to gain ground inch by inch. But it is exactly the reluctance to engage in such day-to-day, inconspicuous work among the working people that represents the greatest danger to the party, threatening to cut it off from them. Lenin stressed that party members must be capable of any sacrifice and of overcoming the greatest obstacles, in order to carry on the work of political education of the people systematically, perseveringly, and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—in which proletarians or semi-proletarians were to be found.

During the period of reaction the Bolsheviks used every opportunity of working among the people, from the Duma down to any association of people of any kind. The illegal party organisations were at the centre of all work and this gave a revolutionary direction to the legal activities of the Bolsheviks. Things the Bolsheviks

could hardly state openly were said by the illegal organisations in leaflets and in conversations with workers to make the workers see the need for uniting in order to overthrow tsarism and capitalism.

The behaviour of arrested revolutionaries during investigation and trial was of great importance. Already in 1903, the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party adopted a resolution binding proletarian revolutionaries to refuse to give testimony during investigation so as to avoid giving the police any fresh clues and to prevent further arrests.¹ The Bolsheviks refused to give testimony in court when the hearings were not public and the defendant had no opportunity of addressing the people, but made full use of open trials to expose the anti-popular essence of tsarism. The speeches of Bolsheviks in tsarist courts were put into leaflet form and circulated by party committees.

A proper combination of legal and illegal forms of work is essential to cope successfully in a situation where the police and security forces are all the time intent upon planting their spies and agents in the revolutionary party.

The Bolshevik group in the Duma was one of the principal legal bodies through which the Bolshevik party conducted its revolutionary work among the workers and peasants during the period of reaction. Although they had no illusions whatsoever about the real nature of a representative body under tsarism, the Bolsheviks nevertheless did not scorn the opportunities that the Duma elections and debates offered for activat-

¹ See *The CPSU: Resolutions*, Part 1, 1954, p. 48, Russ. Ed.

ing issues, criticising the autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie and adding to the political understanding of the people.

Bolshevik members of the Duma visited factories and workers' districts, kept in touch with their constituents, worked in the trade unions, contributed to the party press, assisted the local party organisations, met underground party workers, and organised secret meetings.

The activities and tactics of the Bolsheviks in the Duma provided a good example of how a reactionary parliament may be used by the workers' party to educate and organise the working people and prepare them for a revolution, that is, how such a parliament can be made to serve a revolutionary purpose.

Besides working through the Duma, the Bolsheviks also carried on work legally through the trade unions as militant organisations of the proletariat. They tried to prevent the trade unions from developing along the lines of trade unions of the West European type. The Bolsheviks consolidated their position in the legal trade unions, and at the same time set up illegal trade unions, and through both legal and illegal trade unions strengthened their ties with the workers and hastened the development of their revolutionary class-consciousness. During the period of reaction many trade unions staged strikes, organised aid for the strikers, familiarised their members with Bolshevik publications, and discussed topical political issues.

In their work of educating the workers for revolution, the Bolsheviks made use of cultural organisations (clubs, different societies, general education courses, evening schools and libraries) and conferences convened by the liberals and

concerned with popular universities, cooperatives, the activities of factory doctors, women's rights, and so on. As some of their members were under the influence of the Bolsheviks, such permitted conferences had a political dimension. The Bolsheviks used them in order to expose the reactionary policies of tsarism and the sham democratism of the liberal bourgeoisie.

As the Bolsheviks flexibly combined illegal and legal forms of work, set up Bolshevik groups in the trade unions, workers' associations and cultural societies, and were active in the Duma, their influence on the people grew.

Communist and workers' parties in different countries have to work in widely different conditions, and this may require that the balance between legal and illegal forms of work be varied. But whatever the circumstances, the party should always preserve its militant revolutionary character, maintain its contact with the workers and prove capable of changing the forms of struggle promptly depending on the situation.

PRESERVING AND BUILDING UP THE PARTY

At the same time as they were working out and introducing the new tactics, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to wage an uncompromising struggle against growing opportunism.

The Mensheviks were demoralised by the defeat of the revolution. They thought that Russia had entered a constitutional era of evolutionary regeneration from above, by means of reform, and called for conciliation with the bourgeoisie and the reactionary regime, thus betraying democracy as well as socialism. The Mensheviks in-

sisted on the liquidation of the illegal party, and demanded that revolutionary struggle guided from underground be stopped. This was the price they were prepared to pay to the tsarist government if it would permit them to set up a legal non-party organisation. This deservedly earned them the name of "liquidators."

Lenin laid bare the roots of this attitude of the Mensheviks, pointing out that it was expressive of a deep-seated social phenomenon, that it was indissolubly connected with the counter-revolutionary mood of the liberal bourgeoisie and with the disintegration of the democratic petty bourgeoisie.

Unfortunately there were some unstable elements among the Bolsheviks, who wavered considerably under pressure from the reaction. Using leftist phraseology as a cover, they argued that a revolutionary had no business in the reactionary Duma or other legal bodies. His proper place was behind a barricade. Therefore they wanted all lawful work to stop and the Social-Democratic group to be recalled from the Duma. These *otzovists* (from the Russian for recall) formed a group in opposition to the party line. Lenin described them as "liquidators-in-reverse." Indeed, to give up lawful forms of work among the people meant breaking the ties between the people and the party, inevitably turning the party into an isolated sect. The reluctance to work perseveringly among the people, and the substitution of revolutionary phrases for day-to-day revolutionary activities, represented a great danger for they imposed on the party a wait-and-see attitude or a predisposition to commit rash acts. They meant that the party could not form a correct idea of the changing situation and use whatever

opportunities there might be to further the interests of the proletariat and its allies.

The *otzovists* ignored the fact that the revolution being at a low ebb, there was no revolutionary situation present in the country. Therefore their appeals for immediate revolutionary action were plain adventurism. They were ultra-revolutionary phrase-mongers, who refused to work patiently by organising and educating the proletariat and its allies. Their tactics sprang from their dogmatic approach to the definition of the tasks of a Marxist party.

Both the "liquidators" and the *otzovists* questioned the revolutionary potential of the masses, the ability of the working class to succeed, and the very need for the party, and refused to obey the party's decisions.

The "liquidators," as opportunists, clamoured for legality by any and every means and falsely declared to all and sundry that the illegal party did not exist. They labelled the restoration and consolidation of the party underground organisations a "reactionary idea." The *otzovists*, on the extreme left, went out of their way to hamper the work of the Bolsheviks in lawful organisations. They made their appearance in the trade unions and the workers' clubs that were still functioning with the sole idea of "blowing them up." In his article, "A Caricature of Bolshevism," Lenin showed that the *otzovist* slogans, "down with the lawful organisations" and "down with representation in the Duma," benefited nobody but the "liquidators" who were straining to get rid of party control. In actual fact the so-called "revolutionism" and "leftism" of the *otzovists* were merely expressions of their confusion and utter inability to cope with the difficult work the

party had to do at that time. This confusion which seized a group of wavering intellectuals in the party who were daunted by the hardships involved in party work at the period of reaction, brought the *otzovists* and the "liquidators" quite close together. And so the Bolsheviks had to fight "liquidationism" on two fronts—on the left as well as on the right.

The "liquidators" and the *otzovists* found an eloquent advocate in Trotsky and his few supporters, who were trying to spread centrism in Russia. Centrism was an ideology and policy of subjugating the proletarian element to the petty bourgeois element in the composition of a common party. Ostensibly advocating non-factionalism, Trotsky insisted that all factions in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party should unite, regardless of differences of opinion between them. That was a most unprincipled line. Declaring himself to be a "supra-factional" Social Democrat, Trotsky was merely using the idea of conciliation to cover up his thoroughly "liquidationist" attitude.

Lenin exposed Trotsky's double-dealing and opportunism, stressing that his centrism was particularly dangerous to the party because of the pretence that it merely objected to factionalism. Lenin wrote: "... Trotsky and the 'Trotskyites and conciliators' like him are more pernicious than any liquidator; the convinced liquidators state their views bluntly... whereas the Trotskys deceive the workers, cover up the evil, and make it impossible to expose the evil and to remedy it. Whoever supports Trotsky's group supports a policy of lying and of deceiving the workers, a policy of shielding the liquidators."¹

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 17, p. 243.

During the period of reaction, the Trotskyites were supported by a group of conciliators. For the sake of a fictitious "unity," the conciliators, similar to the Trotskyites, sought "conciliation" between the Bolsheviks and the "liquidators", the *otzovists*, and the Trotskyites. In the name of such "conciliation" they called for dissolving the Bolshevik group. Behind Lenin's back, the conciliators negotiated with Trotsky on joint action, on aiding the Trotskyite *Pravda*, which was published in Vienna, and closing down the Bolshevik newspaper, *Proletary* (the Proletarian). Lenin firmly rejected these proposals and showed that the conciliators were playing into the hands of the party's enemies. He wrote: "...the conciliators are not Bolsheviks at all, ... they have nothing in common with Bolshevism, ... they are simply inconsistent Trotskyites..."¹

Taking advantage of the crisis into which the opportunists had managed to plunge the party, the Trotskyites set out to organise all the elements hostile to the party into one bloc and, without consulting the Central Committee, took steps to convene what they called a "general" party conference.

Lenin described this move as a gamble aimed at destroying the party's central bodies and thus destroying the party as an organisation. He wrote: "Trotsky unites all to whom ideological decay is dear, all who are not concerned with the defence of Marxism; all philistines who do not understand the reasons for the struggle and who do not wish to learn, think, and discover the ideological roots of the divergence of views. At this time of confusion, disintegration, and wavering it is easy for

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 261.

Trotsky to become the 'hero of the hour' and gather all the shabby elements around himself. The more openly this attempt is made, the more spectacular will be the defeat."¹ Lenin observed with some indignation that Trotsky behaved like a despicable careerist and factionalist who paid lip-service to the party and behaved worse than any other factionalist.

The local party organisations supported Lenin and repudiated the Trotskyites' encroachments on the party. The efforts of the "liquidators" and the Trotskyites to split the party plainly showed that their aim was to destroy the illegal revolutionary party of the proletariat and that no unity with them was therefore possible. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw it as an urgent task to purge the party of those elements that were hostile to it.

While purging its ranks of unstable and wavering elements, the Bolshevik Party promoted to leading positions staunch revolutionaries who considered nothing too difficult if the interests of the revolution required it. Many of them were later (in Soviet times) to write in party questionnaires under the heading of "Education": A complete higher course of gaol." Indeed, the first Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee—the supreme body of Soviet power, Yakov Sverdlov, was arrested three times and twice escaped from exile, spending altogether almost twelve years in prison and exile. The prominent Soviet statesman and organiser of socialist industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, who took part in the revolutionary struggle against tsarism for 14 years, spent eight years of that time in prison, doing hard labour, and in exile. Felix Dzerzhinsky,

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 17, p. 21.

an outstanding revolutionary, (and later a prominent Soviet leader and the organiser of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the suppression of counter-revolution and sabotage), was arrested six times, escaped from exile three times, was sentenced twice to hard labour and spent eleven years in prison, doing hard labour, and in exile. On December 31, 1908, he made the following entry in his diary: "Today is the last day of 1908. It is the fifth time that I have had to see the New Year in gaol (1898, 1901, 1902, 1907); the first time was eleven years ago. I have matured in prison as I have suffered the agonies of solitude, cut off from the world and from life. Notwithstanding all this, I have never felt any doubt about the justice of our cause. Today, when all hopes may have been buried for long years in streams of blood, when they are crucified, nailed to the gallows, when many thousands of fighters for freedom are in gaol or exiled to the snow-bound Siberian tundra—I feel proud. I see millions already on the move, shaking the old regime,—millions in whose midst new forces are arising to undertake new struggles. I am proud of being with them, of seeing, feeling and understanding, and of having shared much of their suffering. Here in prison, it is often hard, and at times it is terrible. . . . And yet, if I were to begin life afresh, I would begin it the way I have done."¹

THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE

During the period of reaction the tsarist autocracy saw that violent methods alone were not enough to keep the people subjugated. They had to

¹ F. E. Dzerzhinsky. "From the Diary of a Prisoner." *Sel. Works*, Vol. 1, 1957, pp. 181-182, Russ. Ed.

be enslaved spiritually too—that meant, disarmed ideologically. With this purpose in mind, the reactionaries assumed the offensive on the ideological front as well, trying to make the workers forget the fighting tradition of the first Russian revolution, its revolutionary slogans and its forms of struggle.

Intellectuals of the counter-revolutionary liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie were the first to denounce the revolution and start propagating an idealist philosophy of the most reactionary kind. Although the tsar's executioners were hanging and shooting revolutionaries, Cadet professors and writers spoke out and wrote against the revolution, which they condemned as "madness" and a "mistake."

In the spring of 1909 a group of Cadets published a collection of articles under the common title of *Vekhi* (Landmarks). From its first page to its last it was permeated with hatred for the revolution and the people. The *Vekhists*, who openly renounced the democratic tradition, considered the struggle against feudal survivals and the autocracy "artificial" and unnecessary, and urged the workers to repent, and to be humble and obey their masters unquestioningly. They employed the chauvinist slogan of "Great Russia" which expressed the imperialist appetites of the Russian bourgeoisie. Afraid that they might be called to account for openly siding with counter-revolution in this way, the Cadets saw their chance of survival in preserving and consolidating the autocracy.

Lenin branded *Vekhi* as "a veritable torrent of reactionary mud poured on the head of democracy," as an "*encyclopaedia of liberal renegacy*."¹

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 16, p. 124.

Vekhism became another word for treachery and counter-revolutionism. It was the inevitable offspring of counter-revolutionary liberalism, inseparable from tsarism and the bourgeoisie and spearheaded against scientific socialism, against the views of revolutionary democracy.

The works of reactionary bourgeois writers and renegades served the same purpose. It became fashionable to extol traitors and provocateurs and to depict the revolution as a dark, chaotic outburst, doomed from the start. The hero of their books was an individualist, utterly devoid of public spirit. He was without conscience or morality, believing only in the "freedom of the individual." He continually searched his tiny, embittered heart for all that is worst in human nature, taking a perverse delight in what he found. In the end, the hero usually committed suicide.

Intelligent workers despised such trash. It is significant that, according to the report of the Petersburg metal-workers' library for 1911, the authors whose books were in most demand were the great Russian writers, Gorky, Tolstoy and Chekhov. To the philosophy of decadent literature, "Man is base by nature," the workers opposed Gorky's "Man is a proud word."

It was in those hard times that Gorky, founder of the literature of socialist realism, published his famous novel *Mother*, and numerous short stories, sketches and articles in which he sang the cause of the revolution and called on the people to get ready for a fresh revolutionary upsurge. He was in the forefront of the struggle against reaction in the sphere of literature and was an active contributor to the Bolshevik press.

His close friendship with Gorky did not stop Lenin from criticising Gorky's mistakes and he

watchfully frustrated attempts by ideological opponents of the Bolsheviks to win the great writer over to their side.

The reactionaries tried to undermine the foundations of Marxism and dialectical and historical materialism with the aid of people who professed to be Marxists and pretended hypocritically to be champions of Marxism. They claimed that all they wanted to do was merely to "supplement," to "refine" Marxism, bringing it into line with contemporary science. In truth, however, they sought to replace dialectical materialism with the philosophy of bourgeois idealism.

Therefore, the Bolsheviks had to repulse the revisionists and degenerates in the theoretical field. It was necessary to show them up in their true light and to defend the theoretical foundations of the Marxist party. Nor was that all. During the period of reaction, the situation made it essential for the party to intensify its theoretical work. Lenin wrote: "The 'present moment' in Russia is precisely one in which the theoretical work of Marxism, its deepening and expansion are dictated... by the whole objective state of affairs in the country. When the masses are digesting a new and exceptionally rich experience of direct revolutionary struggle, the theoretical struggle for a revolutionary outlook, i.e., for revolutionary Marxism, becomes the watchword of the day."¹

In April, 1908, Lenin started work on problems of Marxist philosophy. He moved from Paris to London where he studied hundreds of philosophical and science treatises in German, Russian, English and French. His *Marxism and Revisionism*

¹ Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 15, p. 290.

was published in the same year, and in May, 1909, his fundamental philosophical work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, came out. In this outstanding work Lenin dealt conclusively with all those who had attempted to revise the theoretical foundations of the Marxist party. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin drew scientific conclusions from the great discoveries of natural science made after the end of the nineteenth century and advanced Marxist philosophy, enriching it with new deductions and propositions.

Lenin showed that the "recent" philosophy of empirio-criticism (criticism of experience) was in reality an attempt to replace Marxism by a reactionary idealist philosophy. What the founders of that philosophy—the Austrian physicist, Mach, (1838-1916) and the German philosopher, Avenarius (1843-96)—were trying to pass off as "new" was an old reactionary philosophical system of subjective idealism evolved by an English bishop, George Berkeley, who, in 1710, had published a treatise in an attempt to refute materialism. This is why Lenin's book opens with a section entitled "In Lieu of an Introduction. How Certain 'Marxists' in 1908 and Certain Idealists in 1710 Refuted Materialism."

In answer to claims by the followers of Mach that their philosophy of "pure experience" was above both materialism and idealism, and managed to overcome their contradictions, Lenin showed that in a class society there could be no non-party philosophy and that the whole history of philosophy represented a struggle of materialism against idealism. Every philosophical school represented definite classes and political parties. Machism, the philosophy of the reactionary imperialist bourgeoisie, was no exception.

In common with all other idealists, the Machists attacked the fundamental materialist thesis that nature and matter exist independently of man, independently of man's consciousness which merely reflects the outside world. Defying elementary scientific truths, they sought to maintain that nature was a "complex of sensations." The Machists went so far as to deny the existence of nature before the advent of man and maintained that thought was possible without the brain.

In reality, as Lenin demonstrated in his book, all the new scientific discoveries confirmed the truth of dialectical materialism, which affirms that every new step made by science serves to deepen and expand man's knowledge of the world around him and of the laws which govern it. These laws have an objective existence, they are part of nature and are tested and confirmed by man's social practice and economic activities. Lenin wrote: "The standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental in the theory of knowledge. And it inevitably leads to materialism..."¹

Lenin materialistically summed up and interpreted the scientific discoveries that had recently been made and outlined the path of the further progress of science. The following passage from the theses of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union pays homage to his contribution in this respect: "Lenin was the first thinker of our century who saw in the achievements of natural science of his time the beginning of a tremendous scientific revolution, who was able to disclose and generalise philosophically the revolutionary meaning of the funda-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 14, p. 142.

mental discoveries made by the great explorers of nature. He gave a brilliant philosophical interpretation of new scientific data in the period of the drastic 'breaking of principles' in the leading fields of natural science. His idea of the inexhaustibility of matter has become the general principle of natural science."¹

Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* was a strong ideological weapon for the party of the working class. It furthered the consolidation of the Bolshevik party on the firm basis of Marxist theory. Thanks to Lenin's successful defence and advancement of dialectical and historical materialism, conditions were provided, during the period of reaction, for stepping up ideological work among the people in preparation for the next revolution.

* * *

What lessons can be drawn from the Bolsheviks' experience of struggle during the revolution and in the period of counter-revolution? The more significant points of this experience are:

that it is necessary for a party to work out its strategy and tactics starting from the unity and interrelation of the objective and subjective social factors, the dialectics of whose relationship is determined by the Marxist principle of historicism;

that the working class should be regarded as the leading political force and spokesman of the working people, which must rally around itself all the progressive elements of the nation and

¹ *Lenin's Ideas and Cause Are Immortal*. Theses of the CC CPSU, Moscow, 1969, p. 15.

guide their struggle for democracy and socialism: that in the course of the revolution there inevitably occurs a realignment of political forces, which wage a class struggle against each other to determine the future destiny of the revolution;

that it is an absolute condition of the successful progress of a revolution that it be headed by a genuine revolutionary party, and that this party, whatever the circumstances, maintain its permanent ties with the working people, so as to guide their struggle ideologically and organisationally; that one must know not only how to attack but also how to retreat with minimal losses, so as to preserve the revolutionary forces for preparing new revolutionary attacks.

All of this may be summed up in the words of Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, who, as head of the delegation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, told the 1969 International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties: "We are well aware that ahead of us lies an intense struggle in most diverse sectors. And the role of the revolutionary vanguard of the working class is to ensure that it does not lose touch with the actual conditions of this struggle, to correctly define its principal stages and motive forces and to rouse the people to the battle against imperialism.

"For the communist and workers' parties the struggle against imperialism is inseparable from the struggle for our ultimate goals, for the winning of political power by the working class in alliance with all the other contingents of the working people, for socialism. We believe that the cohesion of the Communists of the world and strengthening of the alliance of all the anti-imperialist forces is the key to success."

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